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Thomas Srampickal**

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A JOURNAL OF CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATION

Moral Approaches for the Third Millennium

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Editorial

As the believing community attempts to understand faith, and interpret life and realities in the light of that faith, theology needs to be renewed accordingly. It is a continuous process. Theology should help the believer meet meaningfully the changes and new challenges of life and the world. The department of theology that greatly needs such renewal is moral theology because it is concerned with translating faith into life. It is where faith and life meet that most challenges, problems and conflicts arise and to which the believers are supposed to respond as human persons enlightened by faith and empowered by grace.

It is the specific task of moral theology to enlighten the life of faith or christian life. In this context, proper explanation and elaboration of the Christian life-style, of which Christ-like dedication and love is the basic model, is important. Significant is also moral theological method, comprising its understanding of the good/right, strategy and procedure in assessing the morality of actions and solving conflict situations.

As Richard McCormick once noted, pre-Vatican II Moral Theology was "all too often one-sidedly confession-oriented, Magisterium-dominated, canon law-centred and seminary-controlled". Indeed, the post-conciliar moral theology has become comparatively more Scripture-inspired, personalistic and pastoral. But it has to grow further along these lines. The articles in this number of *Jeevadhara* are largely explorations of such approaches and visions.

The first article by Dr. John Padipurackal explores issues and challenges in the field of social justice and makes proposals for the new millennium. The long tradition and significance of virtue ethics

and person-centred morality rather than legalistic ethics is discussed by Dr. Stephen Chirapanath. Presentation of agapaistic ethics by Dr. George Therukattil is a comprehensive discussion of "personal-responsible" approach with its application to conflict situations. Viewing sexuality in the context of spirituality Dr. Felix Podimattam indicates a very positive and healthy approach to sexual morality. Finally, Dr. Clement Campos discusses various significant and crucial issues related to the vexed problem of HIV/AIDS with great expertise, understanding and moral sensitivity. We thank all the above writers for their timely contributions to this issue of *Jeevadhara*.

St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary

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Challenges and Hopes for the Third Millennium

An Ethical Reading of Human Situation in the New Millennium

John Padipurackel

Culture is an integral part of human life and activities which are influenced and shaped by culture. The author therefore clarifies the nature of culture and its positive as well as negative impact on human society and development, especially socio-economic development, drawing also on the social teachings of the church. Material and moral poverty, consumerism, media manipulation, international debt problem etc., are then highlighted as the challenges of the third millennium.

1. Introduction

Humanity is entering a new millennium. Before knowing what awaits us in the new millennium we must have a graphic picture of the last two millenniums and its continuing influence on the present. What was the nature of the last two millenniums humanity has passed behind it? We have the great heritage of the teachings, life and sacrifice of great gurus, sages and philanthropists with us. Though we have a history of good and holy things, it is tainted with injustices and oppressions. Even in this new era, the memory of these crimes haunts us. The injustices and oppressions manifest their power in the inter-personal, regional and international levels of human relationships. The evils have manifested their power in almost all areas of life, namely culture, art, literature, economics and politics.

We shall discuss how these problems have influenced culture which provides the basis for various spectra of human life and how they have affected other areas of human interaction, specially economic and political spheres of human existence. The assumption is that human problems are basically cultural in nature.

In making this analysis we shall make use of the social teachings of the Church and ethical evaluations of theologians. The recent social encyclicals of the Popes and documents of the Roman Congregations show considerable interest in matters of justice and peace. Special mention is to be made of the

encyclicals of Pope John XXIII, Paul VI and John Paul II and documents of the various Roman congregations.

2. Culture and the Structure of Human Existence

The social organism, which is a complex phenomenon, is patterned on the culture of a society. Culture functions as the internal power of coherence within the social system. The attempt here is to see the meaning of culture and the challenges it poses, and how they affect individual and collective human development.

2.1. Culture and Its Impact

Without rejecting the limited meaning of the classical concept of culture, anthropologists and ethnologists during the last two centuries have developed an anthropological and historical concept of culture¹. According to this understanding the human is a cultural being and all human expressions are culturally bound. "Culture is necessary for the human being" - *homini cultura sui est necessaria* - according to Pufendorf². The cultural system structures the whole range of human relations according to Talcott Parsons³. Culture governs relations in the personal and interpersonal realms of humans and relations between societies⁴. It is the culture of a society that gives it a specific and distinctive identity and direction for its people. The values of culture provide a person and society with the dynamism to interact.

The values of a culture influence the behaviour of the members of a society and stimulate activity. These values are key to the character, structure and direction of every culture. The values of a culture are rooted in its world-view, i.e., the way a particular group of people see the world through their life experience⁵.

D.S. Amalorpavadass, after analyzing many definitions from East and West, proposes culture as that which a nation considers the best and sum total of

1. Reference is made to the contribution of anthropologists and ethnologists like E. Taylor (*Primitive Culture*: Vol. I, London: John Murray, 1871) and A.L. Kroeber and C. Kluckhohn (*Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions*, New York: Vintage Books, 1962).
2. Quoted in Herve Carrier, *Gospel Message and Human Cultures: From Leo XIII to John Paul II*, translated by John Drury (Pittsburgh: Duquense University Press, 1989), 5
3. T.Parsons, *Societies Evolutionary and Comparative Perspectives* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc., 1966), 9
4. Pitrim A. Sorokin, *Social and Cultural Dynamics* Vol. I: *Fluctuations of Forms of Art* (New York: American Company, 1937), 3
5. S.M. Michael, "The Role of Culture Church in the Transformation of Cultures" in *Indian Missiological Review*, 11, no. 1 (1989); 79-83; here 82

its thinking, living and expression. He suggests the following factors as salient to many cultures:

Culture is an integrated dynamic whole and many elements and conditions can be observed in it: a common world vision or a view of life; common values, common goals and common meaning; common thinking known as systems or thought patterns; common environment and common patterns of behaviour.

The above elements and conditions are acquired, embodied and transmitted through symbols: through techniques, status and role systems, modes of behaviour and artifacts.

They are transmitted through a long tradition and capable of influencing society today⁶.

Culture is living and dynamic. Culture is that intangible mould into which one is placed at birth and all that which one moulds. First, as a mould it is made up of a person's ethnic origin, his discovery and possession of truth, the goodness and beauty within himself and his growing perception of the same outside himself, expressed in philosophy, value systems, religion, worship, myths, symbols, literature, science, technology, social organisation, moral standards, and behavioural patterns. Secondly, culture is also the moulded. The human is not merely acted upon by the cultural mould into which s/he is born; s/he is the moulder of a new culture through interaction with his/her native culture, through new values and world-views that are acquired. Through creative activity humans modify the original cultural mould. Thus one is enriched by one's culture and enriches it in turn.

From these definitions and observations it is evident that there is a gradual development in our understanding of culture. Culture is understood today as encompassing various human aspirations on the material, moral and spiritual levels, and it is difficult to isolate any activity that is not culturally tailored⁷. Culture, with its value patterns, is seen as providing meaning and consistency to every human action and achievement, for the totality of human existence.

6. D.S. Amalorpavadass, *Gospel and Culture: Evangelization and Inculturation* (Bangalore: NBCLC, 1985; 2nd print), 18-19

7. C. Kluckhohn, "The Study of Culture", in *The study of Society: An Integrated Anthology*, Peter I. Rose (ed), (New York: Random House, 1967) 74-93; here 76

2.2. Church's Encounter with Culture

Vatican II, especially its phenomenal document *Gaudium et Spes* (GS), is an expression of the Church's awareness of the decisiveness and centrality of culture in human life. The comprehensive notion of culture, which GS proposes, comprises physical, intellectual, social, ethical, religious and in short, the various aspects of human life. According to it "human culture necessarily has a historical and social aspect and that the word 'culture' often takes on a sociological and ethnological sense."⁸ The link between the Kingdom of God and culture, and the indispensability of culture in the building of the Kingdom appear as a prominent theme in Paul VI⁹. The ethico-spiritual dimensions of culture became prominent with his introduction of the idiom *civilization of love and peace*¹⁰. Paul VI, especially with *Populorum Progressio*, also introduced the link between culture, justice and peace which later in the teaching of John Paul II became more manifest¹¹.

In his address to UNESCO in 1980, John Paul II said, "Man lives a really human life thanks to culture", and "Culture is that through which man, as man, becomes more man, *is more*, has more access to *being*", he meant that man's entire humanity is expressed in culture. Man's destiny depends on the way man takes the cultural phenomenon¹². The moral and spiritual dimensions are pivotal to culture and are fundamental to the formation of both individual and society. "There is no doubt that the first and fundamental cultural fact is the spiritually mature man, that is, a fully educated man, a man capable of educating himself and educating others. Nor is there any doubt that the first and fundamental dimension of culture is healthy morality: *moral culture*."¹³

8. GS 53. 1-3

9. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (EN), 20. See also *Populorum Progressio* (PP), 40; "Symposium of African Bishops", July 31, 1969 in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* (AAS) 61 (1969), 5777-578

10. Paul VI, "Pentecoste: la nascita della chiesa", Regina Caeli, Domenica di Pentecoste, 17 Maggio 1970, in *Insegnamenti di Paolo VI*, Vol.VII, 1970 (Vaticano: Tipografica Poliglotta Vaticana, 1971), 506-507; here 506

11. PP 1,5

12. John Paul II, "Man's Entire Humanity is Expressed in Culture: address of John Paul II to UNESCO, Paris, June 2, 1980" No.7 in *The Church and Culture Since Vatican II: The Experience of North and Latin America*, (ed) Joseph Gremillion (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1985), 187-200; here 189

13. John Paul II, "Man's Entire Humanity is Expressed in Culture" No.12 in *The Church and Culture Since Vatican II*, 193

An integral approach to culture, synthesizing its various dimensions and its decisiveness in human life, characterises the approach of John Paul II. "Culture, in its deepest reality, is nothing but the special way a people has of cultivating its own relations with nature, among its members, and with God, so as to reach a truly human level of life; it is the 'common life-style' which characterises a specific people".¹⁴

It is by culture that humans live in dignity proper to them, and a threat to human culture brings misery in cultural and moral areas. Our age has experienced and continues to experience such cultural and moral miseries in various magnitudes. They are the result of disregard for the human person in his transcendental essence and of the unprincipled dominion and misuse of creation. Various forms of injustice, totalitarian oppression of entire peoples, moral permissiveness and spiritual degradation are thus perpetuated¹⁵. The misery that results from the rejection of culture appears emphatically in *Centesimus Annus*¹⁶. Culture must respect the human person in his dignity, and build up society which aims at the fulfilment of each and every one. The future of humanity depends on culture in its true sense¹⁷.

2.3. Culture and Development

Although the link between development and culture is not a new realisation, the overwhelming impact of culture on development, especially in its socio-economic dimensions, was realised only recently. It came about as a result of assessment of the Development Decades, carried out under the auspices of UNO, and of development programmes of various agencies, which considered development mainly in terms of economic progress, measurable simply in economic terms.

The development programmes in developing countries operated within a framework, which proposed development in terms of material or quantitative

14. John Paul II, "Culture is for the Improvement of Mankind and Development of Cooperation among People's". (Meeting with University Professors and Men of Culture in Coimbra) 15 May 1982, in *L'Osservatore Romano* (OR), 5 July 1982, 6

15. H. Carrier, *Gospel Message and Human Cultures*, 33

16. John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus* (CA), 44-45

17. John Paul II, "Man's Entire Humanity is Expressed in Culture", No.23 in *The Church and Culture Since Vatican II*, 200. The same theme appears in other official documents also: *Redemptoris Missio* (RM) 39; CA 50-51

18. See D.Dorr, *The Social Justice Agenda: Justice, Ecology, Power and the Church* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan), 36-37; 127-128

growth, and in some respects they were simply new and more sophisticated ways of continuing the process begun by colonization. This development model borrowed from the Western capitalist nations is now realized as inadequate and unsatisfactory even to Western nations. It is noted for its irrational use of natural resources, inhuman exploitation of weaker sections of the people everywhere in the world and a generation of unemployment¹⁸. This development model expected a pattern of behaviour, educational and professional styles, ethical code and value system, in short a cultural atmosphere alien to many cultures of the traditional developing countries. The development models, which ignored the culture of the people, played a major role in disrupting the cultural underpinning of society. No wonder that the social fabric began to unravel. Economists and anthropologists alike repudiate the traditional development model as destroying indigenous people and their cultures and repressive of human rights¹⁹.

Financial investment, oriented towards economic growth, was expected to bring about progress and prosperity and socio-economic change in the developing countries. To the dismay of many, the enthusiastic programmes of developmental agencies after the Second World War and post-colonial period, did not produce the set and desired goals, but in addition widened the gap between the haves and have-nots, gave birth to new forms of injustice, drained the natural resources, created unemployment and a situation susceptible to violence. Research and observations revealed the facts which defeated the well-knit programmes. Development, exclusively in terms of quantitative growth and technical advance, failed to eradicate poverty and misery and solve even economic problems. As a result the first two International Development Decades of UNO "revealed the limitations of a development concept based primarily on quantitative and material growth"²⁰. Con-

19. See Idem, *Integral Spirituality: Resources for Community, Justice, Peace, and the Earth* (New York: Orbis Books, 1990), 164-167; J.M. Waliggo, "The Church's Role in Fostering Uganda's Cultural Heritage for Integral Development", in *Church contribution - Integral Development: Fourth Uganda Theological Week*, (eds) J.T. Agbasiere and Zabajungu (Eldoret: Amecea Gaba Publications, 1989), 26-29; H. Carrier, *Higher Education Facing New Cultures*, 300-303. D. Goulet, "The Search for Authentic Development", in *The Logic of Solidarity*, 127-142; here 128

20. UNESCO, "What is the World Decade for Cultural Development?" in *A Practical Guide to the World Decade for Cultural, Development, 1988-1997*, UNESCO (Paris: UNESCO, 1988), 11-25; here 13

cerned people now turned their attention to factors other than economic, namely, to socio-cultural realities²¹.

Culture, as described above, determines the whole life pattern of societies and people, and expresses their spirit and collective unconscious. It is acknowledged that culture, being a fundamental human reality, contains positive and negative elements. The former can boost a development-programme and promote the integral growth of the human, while the latter can hamper the same. The cultural roots of a people provide them strength and selfhood to withstand the oppression and exploitation of the powerful²². Developmental aid and schemes in general ignored the cultural phenomena and, therefore, failed to make a breakthrough in the life situation of the beneficiaries. In certain cases people rejected development projects which disregarded their cultural identity and roots. Gradually it was realized that, unless the phenomenon of culture is understood and penetrated, any development programme remains a mirage²³. Even for economic development in the years to come one will have to take into serious account the culture of the people from which stem values, motivations and attitudes. To put it more directly, development can be humanized if traditional values are allowed to play a part in it²⁴. J.M. Waliggo points out the realization the international community arrived at regarding the outcome of the first two Development Decades.

Searching minds pointed mainly to the absence of culture or cultural heritage, as missing basis for development. People and nations began to discover the basic truth: that any 'development', which lacked a clear definition, could not be effective. They also acknowledged that any 'development programme', that would not be duly based on the cultural heritage of the society concerned, would not be firm

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21. F. Wilfred, "On the Threshold of the 1990's - Emerging Trends and Socio-Cultural Process at the Turn of the Century", in *Jeevadhara* XX, No.115 (1990), 57-71; here 65-66
 22. F.Wilfred, "On the Threshold of the 1990's, 66
 23. UNESCO, "General Report," in *World Conference on Cultural Policies*, Mexico City, 26 July - 6 August 1982: Final Report, UNESCO (Paris: UNESCO, 1982), 1-20; here 10
 24. J.D. May, "Report- The Ethics of Development: 17th Waigani Seminar, University of Papua New Guinea 7-12 September 1986", in *Melanesian Journal of Theology* 3, No.1 (1987), 54-63; here 59

development: because it would be like a building without a foundation²⁵.

Herve Carrier points out the direction the development concept and progress need to adopt if it is to be effective and authentic.

We wish to make it clearly understood that human development is a *cultural* problem: human progress is a contradiction if development is limited to things material and physical. A society in development must of course increase its economic goods; but it must also increase the material goods which come from other parts of its culture, goods which guarantee its ethical and intellectual development, its human dignity²⁶.

From the failure of the Development Decades it is impossible to speak of development without considering its cultural dimensions. In the case of a country, development is a many-sided cultural transformation and requires careful planning in view of the internal balances of the country and for the survival of its national identity²⁷.

The World Conference on Cultural Policies organized by UNESCO 1982 in Mexico, recognizing the inviolable nature of spiritual and cultural values and realizing the undeniable bond between culture and development economic and social,²⁸ recommended to the General Assembly of UNO 'declaration of a decade for development of culture'.

The Conference... Emphasizing that culture constitutes a fundamental part of the life of each individual and of each community and that, consequently, development — whose ultimate aim should be focused on man — must have a cultural dimension, Noting that action to promote cultural development form part of the people's aspirations to achieve political liberation and socio-economic development, Considering that action to promote culture should be considered in the international perspective, as an imperative of world development

25. J.M. Waliggo, "The Church's Role in Fostering Uganda's Cultural Heritage", 29

26. H. Carrier, *Higher Education Facing New Cultures*, 133-134

27. H. Carrier, *Higher Education Facing New Cultures*, 305

28. UNESCO, "Recommendation", Nos. 23-26 in *World Conference on Cultural Policies*, 47-174; here 76-78

conducive to peace.... Recommends [to] ... the United Nations the proclamation of a World Decade for Cultural Development ...; Requests the General Assembly of the United Nations to study the possibility of including among its objectives for the Third Development Decade the implementation of a Plan of Action within the framework of a World Decade for Cultural Development in order to eradicate literacy, ensure broad participation in culture and emphasize the cultural dimension of development and the affirmation of the cultural identity of each nation²⁹.

The Mexico Conference, as these recommendations suggest, accepted an integral approach to culture as well as to development, and indicated the cultural roots of development. The UNO, acknowledging this recommendation and the resolution of the General Conference of UNESCO on 8 November 1985,³⁰ declared the period 1988-1997 the World Decade of Cultural Development by a resolution of 8 December 1986.³¹ "Acknowledging the cultural dimension of development," in its objectives,³² the guide to the action-programme of the Cultural Development Decade describes the place of culture in the process of development, justice and solidarity. "In order to respond more effectively to the needs and aspirations of the population concerned and to secure their active participation in the project, special attention is paid to the cultural effects of economic and social development."³³ This in fact is a great secular event that underlines the profound relation between culture and development, and acknowledges the cultural dimension in development.

29. UNESCO, "Recommendation", No.27 in *World Conference on Cultural Policies*, 78-79

30. UNESCO, "Resolution 11.10 adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO at its twenty-third session: Sofia, 8 November 1985", in *A Practical Guide to the World Decade for Cultural Development*, 59-61

31. UNESCO, "Resolution 41/187 adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO at its twenty-third session: Sofia, 8 November 1985", in *A Practical Guide to the World Decade for Cultural Development*, 62-64

32. UNESCO, "Resolution 41/187 adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO at its twenty-third session: Sofia, 8 November 1985", in *A Practical Guide to the World Decade for Cultural Development*, 63

33. UNESCO, "Guide to the Decade", in *A Practical Guide to the World Decade for Cultural Development*, 27-54; here 34

2.4. Relation between Development and Culture – a Theological Understanding

The link between culture and development appears in the documents of Vatican II, especially in *Gaudium et Spes*³⁴, and the encyclicals of the two recent popes, Paul VI and John Paul II. Both pontiffs show a characteristic respect for the human being and culture when dealing with social, economic, political and scientific progress.³⁵

In *Octogesima Adveniens* Paul VI pointed out that “there has been just condemnation of the limits and even the misdeeds of a merely quantitative economic growth; there is a desire to attain objectives of a qualitative order”. He stressed the importance of “the quality and truth of human relations, the degree of participation and of responsibility” which are, of course, fundamental to many a culture.³⁶ Paul VI placed the plea for justice and development, “the cry of the poor”, at the heart of the teaching of the Church. His concept of integral development and development of every human being and the whole human being contain a vision that considers development in its human dimension with more just reason than in its economic aspect.³⁷ The various realms and moral dimensions of development have been an integral part of the teaching of Paul VI, according to the observation of H. Carrier: “He repeatedly calls attention to the *moral realities* underlying any and all human progress. Culture, development, and peace are one, and Paul VI expressed that fact in a phrase that caught the popular imagination: ‘development is the new name for peace’”.³⁸

The relation between culture and development is a major topic in John Paul II’s concern. First of all, he emphasized the cultural conditions that govern the development of peoples. In the document instituting the Pontifical Council for Culture, he defined the indispensable place of culture in development issues: “It is more and more clear that cultural progress is intimately bound up with the construction of a world with more justice and

34. *Gaudium et spes* (GS) 60.1

35. H. Carrier, *Gospel Message and Human Cultures*, 44

36. *Octogesima Adveniens* (OA), 41.1

37. *PP*, 3,14

38. H. Carrier, *Gospel Message and Human Cultures*, 46

brotherhood.”³⁹ Secondly, the anthropological vision of John Paul II is reflected in his concept of development, especially when he emphasizes its cultural dimension. On many occasions he has strongly reasserted the validity of a definition of development which respects the cultural and spiritual dimension of the human being. In *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, John Paul II asserts that development in terms of “being” rather than “having”, is to be considered not merely in its economic dimension, but in its overall functioning to make available goods necessary for people “to be”, “more human”, and “at the level of the true vocation of men and women.”⁴⁰ Development, as is clear from the address of John Paul II in New Delhi 1986, is related to culture and the spiritual destiny of the human: “The pursuit of integral human development invites the world to reflect on culture and to view it in its relationship to the final end of man. Culture is *not* only an expression of man’s temporal life but can aid in reaching his eternal life.”⁴¹ In other words, John Paul II considers development in terms of the *interior dimension* and the *specific nature* of the human.⁴²

In short, according to present day evaluation, culture can be overlooked only at the expense of the human. All human problems, whether social, economic or anything else, must be approached through the spectrum of culture: “All human activity takes place within a culture and interacts with culture”, as *Centesimus Annus* rightly affirms.⁴³ Development in order to be meaningful must have a cultural dimension or rather the concept of development must be made integral incorporating, along with economic and social dimensions, the cultural dimension as well.

39. John Paul II, “John Paul II Institutes Pontifical Council for Culture”. Letter of John Paul II to Cardinal Agostino Casaroli, Secretary of State, on the founding of the Pontifical Council for Culture, 20 May 1982, in *OR* 28 June 1982,7

40. *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (SRS), 28.9-10

41. John Paul II, “La ver a liberazione sara raggiunta soltanto quando sara perseguita la visione spirituale dell’uomo” February 2, 1986 in *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, IX, I : 1986,(Vaticano: Liberia Editrice Vaticana, 1986) 277-284; here 280

42. SRS 29.1. See also. John Paul II, “ Opening Address at the Puebla Conference: 28 January 1979”, in (eds.) J. Eagleson and P.Scharper, *Puebla and Beyond*, Translated by J. Drury(New York: Orbis Books),66

43. *Centesimus Annus* (CA),51

3. Problems facing Humanity in the New Millennium – an Ethico-Cultural Perspective

The realisation that the disregard of culture in the development agenda brought about its failure, is a very significant event in socio-economic history. However the same development agenda continues to be in force to the disadvantage of individuals and societies especially in developing countries. Apart from the fact that such development programmes do not hasten progress, they aggravate poverty and deplete cultural riches of a people. Development agenda prepared in a specific cultural milieu and enacted in another place fails to motivate the people to whom it is meant for. They uproot people from their soil, environment and cultural heritage. Therefore underdevelopment is not just an economic problem. Usually many development models embody hidden cultural agenda and ultimately this brings about situations similar to that of the present day third-world situations.

3.1. Material and Moral Poverty

The result of the current development model is continuing poverty, the situation of having 'less than human conditions'. It consists in "the material poverty of those who lack the bare necessities of life, and the moral poverty of those who are crushed under the weight of their self-love; oppressive political structures resulting from the abuse of ownership or the improper exercise of power, the exploitation of the worker or unjust transactions".⁴⁴ From this perspective, poverty signifies meaningfully the condition of material poverty of the needy and the moral poverty of the rich. The rich lack the interior wealth so as to lead an authentic life. The poor, on the other hand, are in need of material goods essential for a worthy human life. This situation creates not merely an economic crisis, but an ethical crisis with profound implications.

3.2. Poverty – An International Problem

The situation of poverty and underdevelopment is not merely a regional or national problem, but an international issue. The imbalance between the rich and poor countries had made poverty a social question of universal significance. The immediate reasons for poverty are past colonialism, present neo-colonialism and unilateral power in trade relations. With the end of

44. PP 21

colonialism by the middle of the last century, there emerged the new phenomenon of neo-colonialism. We identify the domination by small privileged elite within poor countries, namely the politicians, rich and bureaucrats. They ally with power centers outside their countries to promote the interest of both. As a result the poor nations remain ever poor while the rich ones become still richer.⁴⁵ This exactly is neo-colonialism: the rich in the affluent nations and the multinational companies tamper the destiny of the people of a nation. Neo-colonialism manifests its power very evidently in unjust trade and this problem was pointed out already by John XXIII. Paul VI goes beyond problems of attitude to problems of structure, noting injustices built into the present order of trade and domination.⁴⁶ Under the guise of helping the poor, improving trade relations and creating job opportunities in developing countries, we have now globalisation in trade scenario. The big talk about making the globe a market accessible to all and free exchange of the benefits of technological skills is but another colonial device to exploit poor countries for the interest of the rich. In world trade agreements the developing nations do not have bargaining power and they do not enjoy equal status with the rich. In short, liberation from oppressive socio-economic and political mentalities and structures is a prerequisite for development. There should be an end to the exploitation, which is the result of unjust deals in the areas of agriculture, trade and labour by the rich and powerful in the regional and international levels. It is legitimate to conclude that the problem of poverty can be resolved only when social justice is maintained in a global level.

3.3. Globalisation and Cultural Domination

The development agenda, today with its emphasis on globalisation and free market economy is a form of cultural domination by the affluent.⁴⁷ Globalisation propagates a life-style as universally commendable, but in fact it is conducive only to the Western Hemisphere. Its talk about a universal culture is but a business trick. It is evident that there is no such thing as a universal culture. Technology and artifacts bring with them a set of material goods and consumer commodities and these carry with them a mentality and life-style: it ranges from soft drinks to sophisticated super computers and ultra modern vehicles. Globalisation not only affects indigenous

45. See PP 57

46. Frank Sawyer, *The Poor Are Many* (Kampen: Uitgeversmaatschappij, 1992), 40

47. CA 36.4

technology and products, but also thwarts the values of concern, solidarity, simplicity and moderation in indigenous cultures. Consider advertisements like the following: 'Owner's pride and neighbour's envy'. It gives no value for harmony and solidarity among people, since it creates in the mind of the relatively rich people to go after consumer goods without the least regard for people living without them.

3.4. Consumerism – Product of the Development Agenda and Free-market Economy

The development model and the accompanying globalisation create confusion in the minds of people as to the authentic way of life and its expression. The traditional development model and globalisation always target "the benefit of certain social groups" and easily make people "slaves of possession and of immediate gratification, with no other horizon than the multiplication or continual replacement of the things already owned with others still better". *Sollicitudo Rei socialis* calls it the *civilization of consumption* or *consumerism*.⁴⁸ Neither the Church teachings nor ethicists deny a necessary economic dimension or the availability of goods essential for a decent living as an important concern of authentic development. But in the culture of consumerism people misunderstand authentic life as one possessing lot of material goods or what the Church documents call the mentality of "having". They disregard that of "being" or the realisation of human vocation as such.⁴⁹ Confusion as to the meaning of integral development and the resultant lack of freedom make people puppets in the hands of consumerism. Moreover, it involves lot of *throwing away* and *waste* and gives no concern for its possible value and use by some other human being who is poorer.⁵⁰ The end result of a culture of consumerism is radical dissatisfaction among a vast majority of people⁵¹. As *Centesimus Annus* rightly observes, it brings about serious destruction to the human environment. The unbridled crave for consumer goods also leads to an irresponsible attitude towards nature and invites serious ecological problems.⁵²

48. SRS 28.2

49. GS 35; PP 19; SRS 28.4

50. SRS 28.2

51. SRS 28.5

52. CA 37.1

3.5. International Debt Problem – The Viper’s Tangle

A situation that challenges the interdependence between nations and further impedes the progress of the developing countries is the international debt problem. Needing assistance for development programmes the Third World nations had accepted loans from the affluent nations and international agencies. Use and misuse of huge amounts thus received heap on many developing nations as debts, which they can never repay. The debts drag the debtor nations to a situation of permanent obligation to the donors: in order to repay the debts the debtor nations ‘export the capital needed for improving or at least maintaining their standard of living’ to the international financial market. The development assistance loans originally meant to the progress of the developing nations thus has turned out to be a counter-productive mechanism⁵³. The Church documents recommend a human and realistic understanding, and much more an ethical understanding of the interdependence between nations on the part of the agencies⁵⁴.

International Debt – An Ethical Approach to the Question gives certain recommendations:

- (a) The proposed revision of policies on development in the developed nations shall take into account the situation in developing countries. Otherwise the unilateral growth in the former will further marginalize the poorest countries.
- (b) A more liberal attitude towards exports from the developing countries and sharing of technical know-how, economic activities and labour can promote the development of poor nations.
- (c) A reduction in the interest rates for loans and avoiding erratic fluctuations in exchange rates are important steps.
- (d) A revival of international trade conditions in order to foster justice and international solidarity. This has to be done in mutual agreement with the countries concerned and with the help of competent international institutions.⁵⁵

53. SRS 19.1-6

54. SRS 19.6; Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *International Debt- An Ethical Approach to the Question: At the Service of the Human Community*. 27 December 1986 (London: CTS)

55. Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *International Debt- An Ethical Approach to the Question*, 18-19

Due to the efforts towards conscientization from the part of the Church, theologians and activists, several agencies and nations have taken positive steps to resolve the debt question. However, we observe that there are yet several issues to be resolved.

3.6. Manipulation of Media

A factor that evokes serious anxiety at the dawn of the new millennium is the enormous potential of the media of social communications in the modern society and its use. Various means of communication function as dominant factors in the creation and transmission of culture. Knowing the possibilities of media the multi-national companies and affluent nations control the media to their advantage for fostering consumerism, destructive patterns of consumption and greed in the minds of the people, namely, to make maximum profit⁵⁶. Instead of respecting and serving human persons and cultures, mass media can propose deformed outlook on human life and challenge sound traditional values in indigenous cultures.⁵⁷ In order to make progress authentic and morally acceptable media shall be enriched with ethic-cultural perspectives.

3.7. Human Rights Violation

Even fifty years after the Declaration of Human Rights atrocities against human dignity are a continuing saga, both in the developed and developing nations. In spite of the positive awareness about the inviolability of human rights,⁵⁸ we witness cases of discrimination based on race, colour, language and religion. Violence against ethnic minorities and marginalized groups is not very rare even in nations, which talk proudly about constitutional protection of rights. In countries like India there are cases of continuing discrimination on the basis of caste. These discriminations become manifest in the social, economic and political interactions of human persons. Basically discrimination against humans is cultural in nature. The cause of discrimination is the claim that some are superior to others culturally, socially and so on. As a result of this mentality certain segments of the

56. Pontifical Council for Social Communications, *Ethics in Advertising* (Bangalore: Archdiocesan Communications Centre, 1999), No.12

57. Pontifical Council for Social Communications, *Pastoral Instruction Aetatis Novae* (Vaticana: Liberia Editrice Vaticana, 1992), 11-12,8

58. SRS 26; CA 21

society are denied opportunities for cultural, political and civil rights. Human rights violations create situations of ongoing unrest and violence in several countries and regions. The marginalized people often turn to violence and terrorism due to the indoctrination of fundamentalists and fanatics, who take advantage of the situation.⁵⁹

4. Conclusion – Sign of Hope

What is going to be the human destiny in the new millennium? Are there indications of hope? Or are we going to have a dismal future? The sign of hope amidst the clouds of problems is the recognition of the crisis – people realise the gravity of the situation; they know what is at stake. In order to incite fresh hopes there is need for bold decisions and actions – such as would foster justice to culture and related areas. If individuals and nations take to acting in favour of the promotion of authentic culture, integral development will be a tangible result. Nations, especially the affluent ones, must have the political will to take decisions in favour of humanity. The Church assumed a positive and creative role in the last few decades to promote awareness of human rights, propagate social justice, and to resolve the international debt issue. The effect of these actions further deepens our faith in humanity and gives us fresh hopes. The Church has to continue these great works, and this is but a part of her work of evangelization in the new millennium.

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59. See *PP* 29-31

An Ethics of Virtue

Stephen Chirappanath

Classical moral theology was dominated by laws and norms and obedience to them. But in the pluralistic society and complex moral milieu of today, application of laws to actual situations has become very hard and difficult. What is needed today is a 'virtue ethics', notes the author. The author then highlights the significance of virtue ethics by referring to several outstanding scholars, old and new, including Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, Mc Intyre, Hauerwas, Pellegrino. A truly moral person is one with a 'discerning heart' rather than analyzing brain.

Classical moral theology attempted to interpret the will of God in the existential situations of everyday Christian life: the result was the formulation of various traditional laws and principles followed especially in the second millennium. However, from the eve of the third millennium, to find 'more human' solutions to the difficult and complicated moral problems linked with the complexities of actual life, attempts are being made to couple principles with virtues, the classical with the historical, the normative with the narrative, the object with the acting subject.

Ethical Pluralism – Context of Virtue Ethics

The hallmark of the dawn of the third millennium is moral diversity. To quote the Jesuit moral theologian, John Mahoney, ethical pluralism "is an increasingly recognized simultaneous phenomenon in the contemporary world".¹ The empirical fact of pluralism in moral practice, in its turn, is founded on one's own anthropological presuppositions which are the bases of one's understanding of ethical values and one's judgement about the moral rightness of an action². There are theologians who speak about the

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1. John Mahoney, *The Making of Moral Theology: A Study of the Roman Catholic Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 325.
 2. For example, on the question of abortion. Cf. Ronald Fabbro, *Cooperation in Evil: A Consideration of the Traditional Doctrine from the Point of View of the Contemporary Discussion about the Moral Act* (Rome: PGU, 1989), 64-65.

inseparability of the phenomenon of ethical pluralism from every major dimension of our life – intellectual, cultural, social, ethical, and religious transformations that have taken place in recent times.³ Consequently and necessarily, we “belong to many groups, each of which is marked by a plurality of stances with respect to moral values and moral norms”.⁴ One of the most fundamental principles of a pluralistic society is to avoid the imposition of the values of any particular social group on the individual.⁵ Catholic teaching does realize the fact of pluralism, and has shown us a positive evaluation of pluralism.⁶

It is in this context Edmund D. Pellegrino, a philosopher – physician, argues that “in a pluralistic society, we need laws, rules, and principles, ... but that ... is insufficient in the complex and often unpredictable circumstances of decision making, where technical and value desiderata intersect so inextricably”.⁷ What we require in the contemporary society, characterised by moral pluralism, is neither a direct confrontation with the pluralistic realities of the world nor a reconciliation with the evil but higher levels of moral sensitivity that an *ethics of virtue* demands. How sensitively the above issues are confronted, principles are applied, and conflicts among them are resolved in this society depends, as Pellegrino observes, more on one’s *virtuous character* than one’s capability at ethical discourse or moral casuistry.

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3. Volker Eid illustrates this thought by considering the contemporary attitudes to divorce which are occasioned at least indirectly by social and cultural changes. Thus marriage, a social institution, like all such institutions, is constantly undergoing historical development. Volker Eid, “Die gestörte Kommunikation über das Ethische: Fakten und Hintergründe,” in *Der ethische Kompromiss*, ed. Helmut Weber, *Studien zur theologischen Ethik*, vol.12 (Freiburg, Wien: Verlag Herder, 1984), 61-62. It does not follow from this that divorce is morally justified.
 4. Fabbro, *Cooperation in Evil*. 65.
 5. Philip J. Wogaman, “Persecution and Toleration,” in *A New Dictionary of Christian Ethics*, ed. James Childress and John Macquarrie (London: The Westminster Press, 1986), 464-468.
 6. *The Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* affirms the Church’s solidarity with the pluralist world and accentuates the necessity for a shared learning experience through continuous dialogue.
 7. Edmund D. Pellegrino, “The Virtuous Physician, and the Ethics of Medicine,” in *Virtue and Medicine: Explorations in the Character of Medicine*, ed. Earl E. Shelp (Boston: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1985), 250

Convergence with the Catholic Tradition

The vocabulary and eloquence of virtue ethics is not unknown to Catholic moral heritage. The New Testament presents virtue as an interior disposition of moral life. Already the substance of a well-developed theology of virtue was knit together by the earliest patristic writers.⁸ It was the legacy of St. Augustine to establish that a life having a rhythm of Christ-centred virtue finds fulfilment.⁹ Further, medieval theologians, inspired by patristic texts, developed the dynamics of moral virtues. But with the Council of Trent, virtue-centred morality received a set back; though its retrieval was made necessary and urgent through the pastoral directions of the Second Vatican Council and the biblically based moral theology it promoted. The excerpt in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* attests to this fact.¹⁰ So, a theology of virtue represents a long-standing tradition in the Catholic Church.

Further, *Veritatis Splendor*, the moral encyclical of John Paul II, recognises this ethical reality.

Knowledge of God's law in general is necessary, but it is not sufficient: what is essential is a sort of "connaturality" *between man and the true good* [St. Thomas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 45, a. 2]. Such a connaturality is rooted in and develops through the virtuous attitudes of the individual himself: prudence and the other cardinal virtues, and even before these the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity.¹¹

This means that the laws or principles do not suffice for every eventuality in the moral arena. What it needs is the virtuous character that judges the concrete case in question.

8. See Lactantius, "Of False and True Virtue; and of Knowledge," book 6, chap. 5, in *The Divine Institutes*, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325), vol. 7, *Fathers of the Third and Fourth Centuries*, reprinted, eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1985), 166-168.
9. Romanus Cessario, *The Moral Virtues and Theological Ethics*, (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), 1-11.
10. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Città del Vaticano: Geoffrey Chapman - Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1994), nos. 1803-1845.
11. John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor* (Encyclical Letter Regarding Certain Fundamental Questions of the Church's Moral Teaching, Aug. 6, 1993), no. 64, AAS 85 (1993): 1183.

Ethics of Virtue

The recent renewal in the nature and significance of virtue ethics in Catholic moral theology can be dated from the landmark book *After Virtue*, by Alasdair MacIntyre¹². Among Roman Catholic authors, it is perhaps from Jean Porter that the traditional Thomistic understanding on virtue has received broad attention and substantial contribution in recent years¹³. Christian writings succeeding the Council show that the stage was already set for the entrance of virtue ethics. Following lines from Gustafson sufficiently explain this fact:

I propose to explore a way of interpreting and explicating Christian moral life, regarding particularly some of the differences faith in Jesus Christ often does make, can make, and ought to make in the moral lives of the members of the Christian community ... First ... is a delineation of a perspective, a fundamental angle of vision and posture of life that the Christian gospel enables and requires. Second is ... the attitudes and dispositions that are evoked and shaped by loyalty to Jesus Christ. This is ... followed by ... the fundamental intentions, purposes, and ends that are consummate with Christian faith ... Finally, ... Christ and his teaching provide norms to be brought to bear in particular, moral judgments.¹⁴

In the words like "postures", "attitudes", "fundamental intentions, purposes, and ends" and "norms" that Gustafson is talking about, one cannot help perceiving the similarity of his rhetoric to the rhetoric of the virtues.

"Virtue" is the translation of the ancient Greek *arete*, or Latin *virtus*, which meant any kind of excellence. For Aristotle, virtue is a "state of character" (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1106a, 11), "which makes a man good and which makes him do his own work well" (ib. 1106a, 22-24). Virtues for Aquinas are habits and dispositions that enable a man to reason well and to act in accordance with a right reason – *recta ratio agibilium*. Accepting the

12. Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981). More so than in Catholic circles, the recent renewal of attention in the virtue ethic started largely among Anglo American philosophers.

13. Jean Porter, *Recovery of Virtue: The Relevance of Aquinas for Christian Ethics* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1990).

14. James Gustafson, *Christ and the Moral Life* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), 240.

classical–medieval concepts of virtue and their commentaries by modern moral philosophers like Josef Pieper and A. MacIntyre, Pellegrino writes: “Virtue implies a character trait, and internal disposition, habitually to seek moral perfection, to live one’s life in accord with the moral law, and to attain a balance between noble intention and just action”.¹⁵

This is exactly what CCC, no.1803, states: “A virtue is an habitual and firm disposition to do good”. It allows the person not only to perform good acts, but to give the best of himself. The virtuous person tends toward good with all his sensory and spiritual powers. “The virtuous person is someone we can trust to act habitually in a good way”¹⁶.

According to the CCC the making of a Christian takes place through the appropriation of theological as well as natural virtues – the traditional enumeration of “seven primary virtues which comprise the substance of an authentic Christian life: faith, hope, and charity, prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance.”¹⁷ Thus the exposition of a virtuous character based on Christian as well as natural virtues that enable one a moral, spiritual and happy life is exceedingly consonant and consistent with the Catholic moral tradition. It is this aspiration that makes one write: “No matter to what depths a society may fall, virtuous persons will always be the beacons that light the way back to moral sensitivity”.¹⁸

In a pluralistic – consumeristic world, there can be dichotomy between one’s professional as well as personal lives. Here one should be reminded of what Socrates said: “One cannot really be virtuous in part.” About the unity of the virtues of Augustine, the Doctor of Grace, wrote to St. Jerome: “He who has one virtue, has them all, and he who does not have a particular one has none”.¹⁹ A virtuous Christian cannot lead a life of contradiction in

15. Pellegrino, “The Virtuous Physician,” 243. His illustrative reference to C.S Lewis’s comparison of a virtuous person to a well trained tennis player sketches out the idea of the former in the best way. See, C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: MacMillain Co., 1981), 77.

16. Pellegrino, “The Virtuous Physician,” 243.

17. CCC, nos.1803-1845, define and elaborate them systematically. Cessario in *The Moral Virtues and Theological Ethics*, also points to atleast fifty other allied and auxiliary virtues.

18. Pellegrino, “The Virtuous Physician,” 252

19. “Letter to Jerome,” no.167, chap.4, in *The Fathers of the Church* (A New Translation), vol.30, *St. Augustine Letters: Volume IV (165-203)*, ed. Hermigild Dressler, trans. Sister Wilfrid Parsons (Washington D.C., Catholic University of America Press, 1955), 35-36.

which professional and personal morality are divorced. Such a state is incompatible with even the rudimentary interpretations of authentic Christian living, to say nothing of a Christian witness.

It is this awareness that a virtuous person always has an integrated life underpins Richard McCormick's views on the role of virtue-ethics.

I refer to that dimension of ethics known in the trade as "virtue ethics". Its concern is the moral formation ... Thus it is much more formational than informational.... It is concerned with notions such as honesty, loyalty, respect, caring, communication, patience, compassion. To think that the notion of "ethics" can do without these dimensions is to amputate this notion. It is to espouse a concept of ethics wherein the personal qualities ... have no place, where ideals and beliefs have subordinate status, if any at all.²⁰

This shaped G. Santayana to assert in the opening page of his *Dominations and Powers*: "Human society owes all its warmth and vitality to the intrinsic virtue of its members."²¹ As the conviction of Pellegrino vouches for, virtues "give credibility to the moral life" and as the CCC attests, they "order our passions and guide our conduct in accordance with reason and faith"²². Besides, "in traditional Christian terms, to have virtue is recognized as a step to union with the uncreated energies of God, which are the strength of the saints and the source of true morality Virtue in this circumstance unites to holiness"²³. Christian theologians believe that "the Holy Spirit provides special helps to ensure that a virtue-centred morality accomplishes all that the New Testament requires of the believer"²⁴.

The difference between principle and virtue lies not in what each prescribes but in how they achieve one and the same end. What is sought under the species of the virtuous and aimed at under the guise of the obligated are one and the same thing, that is, the realisation of one's nature in union

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20. Richard A. McCormick, "If I Had Ten Things to Share with Physicians," in *The Critical Calling: Reflections on Moral Dilemmas Since Vatican II*, (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1989), 359.
 21. G. Santayana, *Dominations and Powers: Reflections on Liberty, Society and Government* (New York: Charles Scribner and Sons, 1951), 3
 22. Pellegrino, "The Virtuous Physician," 237; CCC, no. 1834.
 23. Tristram H. Engelhardt, "The Crisis of Virtue: Arming for the Cultural Wars and Pellegrino at the Limes," *Theoretical Medicine* 18 (1997): 165-172.
 24. Cessario, *The Moral Virtues and Theological Ethics*, 152.

with God. Consequently, Stanley Hauerwas states: all accounts of the moral life require some appeal to the virtues, principles, and the narrative display of each. What makes Christian ethics Christian is not our methodology, but the content of our convictions.²⁵

After all, ethics of virtue does not provide with a detailed answer to a specific problem. It “provides principles of discernment more than a code of rules for action; what it lacks in specificity it gains in insight”.²⁶

Discernment – a Praxis in Search of a Method

Discernment is specifically a Christian virtue, a virtue of salvation history.²⁷ The Christian tradition of this concept differentiates between the discernment of spirits, the discernment of a divine calling, and the virtue of discernment or synthetic practical wisdom. Discernment as a virtue “regulates or modifies other virtues and the activities of the spiritual life”.²⁸

William C. Spohn defines discernment exactly as “the reasoning heart”.²⁹ In scriptural morality the “heart” is the seat of affectivity and virtuous attributes. In the rhetoric of *Veritatis Splendor*, however, “it is the ‘heart’ converted to the Lord and to the love of what is good which is really the source of true judgements of conscience”³⁰. In the light of this explanation of heart in *Veritatis Splendor*, what Spohn illustrates, explaining Karl Rahner, is convincing: “The right option received through discernment is not only

25. Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 24-29

26. Edmund D. Pellegrino, “Health Care: A Vocation to Justice and love,” in *The Professions in Ethical Context: Vocations to Justice and Love*, ed. Francis A. Eigo (Pennsylvania: University of Villanova Press, 1986), 114.

27. Bernard Häring, *The Virtues of an Authentic Life: A Celebration of Christian Maturity*, trans. Peter Heinegg (Missouri: Liguori, 1997), 69-73. It is frequently mentioned in the New Testament.

28. Diana L. Villegas, “Discernment in Catherine of Sienna,” *Theological Studies* 58 (1997): 23.

29. William C. Spohn, “The Reasoning Heart: An American Approach to Christian Discernment,” in *The Reasoning Heart: Toward a North American Theology*, ed. Frank M. Oppenheim (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1986), 52.

30. John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor*, No.64, AAS 85 (1993): 1183. See Shelton, Charles M., *Morality of The Heart: A Psychology for the Christian Moral Life* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1990), 61-67, 86-125.

morally correct; it also is the most appropriate one, the one most consistent with the kind of person the agent is and aspires to become"³¹, because the test of discernment is exactly the "experience of transcendence as such"³². Consequently, Rahner proposes that Christian discernment may be at the core of the assent of faith and should become pivotal to the pastoral task of moral theology, for it "plays a central role in making moral decisions. It is the skill of moral evaluation in the concrete."³³

James Gustafson identifies discernment with prudence, while George P. Evans sees prudence as a tool in the exercise of discernment.³⁴ However, Spohn finds a little more spiritual significance in discernment than prudence and says that,

it seeks the "fitting" response to God's action in all events ... [and] synthesizes moral principles, situational factors, consequences and insight from the religious tradition into a concrete moral judgement, employing such resources illuminatively rather than prescriptively.³⁵

Herbert Alphonso perceives discernment as a virtue that is a highly beneficial device in the current world. He writes: "If there is one virtue, then, that our age of confusion and upheaval of values is direly in need of, it is *discernment*".³⁶ Grisez foresaw the need and relevance of this "virtue of a committed Christian" towards the end of this century of confusion to read "the signs of the times"³⁷. Thus an ethic of "heart-based discernment of spirits" that is in convergence with *Veritatis Splendor's* virtue-ethics is a method for applying principle based morality to daily life.³⁸

31. Spohn, "The Reasoning Heart: Christian Discernment," 54.

32. Rahner, *The Dynamic Elements in the Church*, 139.

33. Spohn, "The Reasoning Heart: Christian Discernment," 51.

34. Gustafson, "Moral Discernment in the Christian Life," 118; George P. Evans, "Cardinal Virtues," in *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, ed. Michael Downey (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1986).

35. Spohn, "Discernment".

36. Herbert Alphonso, "Docility to the Spirit: Discerning the Extraordinary in the Ordinary," in *Spirituality & Morality: Integrating Prayer and Action*, ed. Dennis J. Billy and Donna Lynn Orsuto (New York: Paulist Press, 1996), 120.

37. One of Jesus' severe criticisms on the religious leaders of Israel was: "You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times" (Mt 16:3)

38. Andrew Tallon, "The Role of the Connaturalized Heart in *Veritatis Splendor*," in *Veritatis Splendor: American Responses*, ed. Michael E. Allsopp & John J. O'Keefe (Kansas City, MO: Sheed & Ward, 1995), 137.

This virtue of discernment is seen by Beauchamp and Childress as one of the four focal virtues of one's professional practice.³⁹ In the modern world, the longing for the virtue of discernment, *an essential part of orthopraxis* in conflict situations, is represented by an author on spirituality:

In such a situation, the Church ... stands in crying need of spiritual discernment in ... her committed laity, in every one of her states of life and spheres of living. So central is spiritual discernment to the living out of Christianity today, that it is insistently being said that Christian formation today is to be basically and radically a formation to discernment.⁴⁰

The Perfect Embodiment of Virtue

This trend towards virtue may well be interpreted in the context of the ethics offered by *Veritatis Splendor*. The encyclical presents a challenge and offers a *model* for a new phase of religious ethics. Thus the moral life of the third millennium, as John Paul II insists, "is not a matter only of disposing oneself to hear a teaching and obediently accepting a commandment. More radically, it involves *holding fast to the very person of Jesus*"⁴¹ 'a model of perfect virtue'. *Veritatis Splendor* accentuates this exhortation and appeal, when it says: "*Following Christ is.... the essential and primordial foundation of Christian morality*".⁴² "What distinguishes Christian ethics is that it is motivated, in the moment of moral choice, by a specific set of affections – those that most closely correspond to the character, affections, and goodness of Christ".⁴³ Here we find a return to the Gospels: "to the *character* of Jesus Christ".

The young man in the Gospel (Mt 19: 16-21) is drawn to Jesus by the compelling 'character' of the person of Jesus. In the present world, marked

39. Tom L. Beauchamp and James F. Childress, *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*, 4th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 468-469.

40. Alphonso, "Docility to the Spirit: Discerning the Extraordinary in the Ordinary," 121.

41. John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor*, no.19, AAS 85 (1993): 1149.

42. Ibid.

43. Edmund D. Pellegrino, "Agape and Ethics: Some Reflections on Medical Morals from a Catholic Christian Perspective," in *Catholic Perspectives on Medical Morals: Foundational Issues*, ed. Edmund D. Pellegrino, John P. Langan and John Collins Harvey (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989), 283.

moral diversity and market-place mentality, the people, believers or not, are to be attracted by the impressive virtuous life of a Christian, because each and every Christian is called to be modelled on "Christ". It is Jesus' way of acting and his words, his deeds and his precepts that should constitute the moral rule of our Christian life. So, "the point is here not exactly to decide what is right or wrong in a given situation, but to foster a way of acting according to certain lines that reproduce the way of life of Christ and of God himself".⁴⁴ In such situations, as in Matthew Jesus exhorts the young man, Carlo Maria Cardinal Martini reminds us that "the main concern is then not simply 'morality' [commandments] in the usual sense of the term, but holiness, fullness of Christian life".⁴⁵

Moreover, Pope Wojtyla's reflection in *Veritatis Splendor* on the meaning of the exchange between the young wealthy questioner and Christ is highly eloquent here.⁴⁶ The young man asked "what must I do to have eternal life?" and Christ replied "if you would enter life, keep the commandments". The rich man said "All these I have observed; what do I still lack?" Christ's second response does not revoke the commandments; in fact, it does not evidently add to them, because giving to the poor might adequately be thought to be an instance of loving your neighbour as yourself. However, John Haldane finds the significance of the same in the instruction that follows – "Come and follow me" – to act "charitably". Here we find an evident reconciliation between the moral law and moral virtue.⁴⁷

Conclusion

Ethics of virtue in Catholic moral tradition seeks to orient us toward developing ways where we can both serve the message of the Gospel which

44. Carlo Maria Cardinal Martini, "Some Basic Considerations on Moral Teaching in the Church," in *Catholic Perspectives on Medical Morals: Foundational Issues*, ed. Edmund D. Pellegrino, John P. Langan and John Collins Harvey (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989), 11.

45. *Ibid.*, 11-12.

46. John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor*, no.6-22, AAS 85 (1993): 1138-1151.

47. John Haldane, "From Law to Virtue and Back Again: On *Veritatis Splendor*," in *The Bible in Ethics: The Second Sheffield Colloquium*, ed. John W. Rogerson, Margaret Davies & M. Daniel Carroll R. Sheffield (England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 38. See also Tallon, "The Role of the Connaturalized Heart in *Veritatis Splendor*," 137-156.

has been handed down to us and minister, in the name of Christ, to the needs of humankind through full and active collaboration -- which means neither compromise nor betrayal -- in the world of our day branded with moral pluralism. Agreeably, it is our earnest conviction that the ethic of virtue -- *habits of the heart* ⁴⁸ -- will enable us to respond positively and realistically, however, not allowing us to miss the meaning of our prophetic call as: "Light to the world".

An ethic of virtue will be another instrument for Christians that helps them "to be *in* the world but not *of* the world". As the whole synthesis makes us realise, both principles and virtues are the two *reciprocal provisions* to "inform" the *conscience* of the Christians that they may not become *of the world* in the contemporary, plural-consumer society. A "ministry" to souls, whether it bases on "norms" or "virtues", that does not attempt to attract Christians to the "light of Christ", but leaves them buried in darkness and in their error, would be a contradiction.

BLM

Aloor P.O

Irinjalakuda

48. Robert Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

Agapaic Ethics of Responsibility

A Methodology for Moral Theologizing in the Third Millennium

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Moral life and decision-making is always beset with situations where two or more values encounter, giving rise to what is known as conflict situations. The agent usually finds it difficult or well nigh impossible to salvage both the values. Traditional catholic moral theology has been resorting to certain principles, especially those of Double Effect and Lesser Evil as keys to solving such conflicts. However, a great deal of discussion and debate has come up recently about the Principle of Double Effect and the emerging Principle of Proportionality. Without denying the salient aspects of the tradition, the author discusses a "relational-responsible approach" to moral assessment and conflict situation.

We are puzzled by the increasing complexity of moral problems at the dawn of the third millennium. Modern Psychology has uncovered the emotional and psychic factors in moral problems. Genetic engineering and Medicine has advanced so much that there are so many subtle nuances in the moral problems that come with it in the field of bio-ethics. In the social ethics too there are so many conflicting values that one is bewildered at the problems raised there. Many people are questioning today even moral absolutes and the time-honoured moral principles. Add to these problems the welter of opinions even among reputed moral theologians regarding moral problems and dilemmas of our human world. The situation could be looked upon as an opportunity for deepening the moral responsibility of each person and for helping every person to form a mature conscience, so that he is able to face the divergent views and trends in a responsible way. So more than ever, we need a good methodology in the enterprise of theological ethics to guide us in our moral reasoning. A methodology in moral theology means a framework within which moral judgements could be made by responsible persons. And this is an urgent task of moral theology today. A mature morality is a vision and a task.

1. Human Experience: A source for Moral Reflection

A good epistemic source for the construction of a moral methodology is human experience. Among the two sources of moral knowledge that *Gaudium et Spes* recognizes, human experience is one and the other being Revelation (in the light of the Gospels).¹ It is interesting to see that the decree *Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* of Vatican II omits or avoids the time-honored Natural Law and in its place puts *Human experience* (which is much more extensive than natural law) as a source along with revelation for judging the rightness or wrongness of a human action. This is a welcome departure from the traditional approach of the documents of papal magisterium, which employ Natural law and Revelation as two sources of moral reasoning. Natural law implies a dichotomy between the natural and the supernatural, which theology today no more accepts. Also the term Natural law often suggests a static concept of natural order and frequently a prevailing historical order is simply projected as natural law. Hence there could be a danger that a particular historical order might be taken as absolute, immutable and universal and as intended by God. So the problem is how to determine this natural law. We know that human race has passed from a static to a dynamic and evolutionary outlook.² Hence we need a methodology able to grapple with the changes and historicity which are perceived in human experience.

In the light of the epistemic source of human experience, we find that in every human action there are two constitutive and characteristic elements, viz., the external action and the intention of the acting subject. Even though there is a universal agreement as to these two elements, the way these two elements are structured in a human act is understood differently. Accordingly in the history of moral theology we find two main currents, one represented by Peter Lombard and the other represented by Thomas Aquinas. Peter Lombard would say that one could make a moral judgement about the external action without taking into account the intention of the acting subject. So there can be acts, which are intrinsically evil, acts evil in themselves. Thomas Aquinas reacts strongly against the view of Peter Lombard. He says that act in itself can never be judged morally good or bad if isolated from the intention of the acting subject. He would say that both elements - the external action and the intention of the acting subject - are essential for judging the morality of an action. Neither in itself is sufficient (*Ia IIae De*

1. G.S. nos.33,46.

2. *Ibid.* no. 5,7.

Fine Ultimo q 1a. 3 ad 3). Also Thomas states that the intention of the acting subject is the cause and principle of the whole action and it is the one which specifies the action. (The encyclical *Humanae Vitae* follows this line of reasoning: Artificial contraception is intrinsically evil, whereas *Gaudium et Spes* places emphasis on mutual love and *human* procreation (responsible parenthood) and takes into account the intention of the acting subject. If it can be justified to use contraceptive means, if it is possible to prove that a contraceptive act is not opposed to the demands of conjugal love and *human* procreation.)

This emphasis of Aquinas has far-reaching importance for moral methodology. According to this view, our human actions are not series of separated, isolated, disjointed actions, but actions, which on account of intention of the acting subject, can be integrated into a person's Christian existence as a whole. Through the varied ranks and interplay of his intentions a person tries to integrate all his actions into a real, human, Christian existence. This approach of Aquinas is of central importance as it says that the fundamental option, the basic orientation of the person's Christian existence is decisive.

In the light of our epistemic source of human experience, we look whether this view of Aquinas is subjective or not. This view of Aquinas is not subjective because he says that the external action must be suited (*proportio*), accomodated (*accomodatio*) and adjusted (*ordinatio*) to the aim one intends to achieve. The external action is necessary in order to realize the end and must be suited and proportionate to the intention. What decides whether the action is suited to the intention of acting person is our human reason. Is this true? We go to human experience if this is true. We shall begin by examining our basic human "**tendencies**" or "**inclinations**", because as Richard McCormick says: "It is impossible to act without having an interest in the object and it is impossible to be attracted by, to have an interest in something without some inclination already present".³ Among the basic tendencies or inclinations of the human person are those to preserve life, to explore or question, to seek out other persons and seek their approval, to use intelligence in guiding actions, to establish good relations with unknown higher powers (religion) etc. Aristotle distinguishes three levels in the basic human experience of **tendency**. There is first of all an *experience of indigence*, an awareness of lacking something, or of wanting

3 As quoted by James B. Tubbs Jr., in "Moral Epistemology in Richard. McCormick's Ethic", in *Christian Bio-ethics* 1996, Vol. 2, no. 1, p. 115

something it does not have or it is not. Secondly there is an *inclination of the tending subject toward the reality corresponding to the want*. And thirdly there is *dynamic openness to a reality outside the tending subject that is congruous or 'fulfilling the lack of the tending subject*. The same three levels can be found also in basic human experience of **questioning**, as shown by Jean Paul Sartre in *Being and Nothing*. It is what Louis Janssens calls the 'pre-discursive', 'connatural', 'instinctive' function of the intellect, or what Max Scheler calls 'Intentionales fühlens' (intentional feelings), which has two aspects: 1) intentionality, i.e., a capacity to discern the reality corresponding to one's wants and 2) interiority, i.e., one is inwardly affected by the reality corresponding to one's needs. This connatural universal function of intellect is to be distinguished from 'discursive' or scientific moral reasoning. Here the intellect does not discover the good but only analyzes it. It is concerned with reflective analysis of values and the adoption of a hierarchy of values. According to St. Thomas Aquinas, this *intentional feeling* or "the knowledge through consonance" is better than "knowledge through scientific reason" for moral judgements. Thus he says that when a man is virtuous and has the dynamism of good moral dispositions, he will discern the morality of an action by a kind of feeling; he will feel the correct moral response. The knowledge through consonance or feeling is the basis, the starting point of morality, according to Aquinas, and the second type of knowledge i.e. knowledge through reason is the legitimization and justification in a critical way of the knowledge through consonance. "All moral knowledge about good and the right has its foundation in our pre-discursively available identification of inclination-based human values".⁴

These basic human experiences also show that human being is basically dynamic. As Paul Ricoeur states man is a '*desiring*' being. And ethics is only the explicitation of all the aspects involved in that desire for being. There are multiple and diverse desires and tendencies in human beings. Human beings are not perfect. They are potentials tending to perfection. All things tend to perfection (Aristotle). Human beings *have to be* what they are potentially. This dynamic character of our being is the ontological source or basis of moral obligation.

Thanks to the fact that our human perfection is an open reality, a relational reality, (in the sense that it is related to God, other human beings and all other reality and hence we cannot come to perfection without actualizing

4 James B. Tubbs Jr. *Art. Cit.*, p. 116

our relations to all these realities), this perfection cannot be considered ego-centric. Also thanks to the selfless openness of our reason which is subject to truth, to the whole truth, this perfection cannot be considered in an individualistic way. Hence we can say from human experience that when we fulfil a tendency, there is a self-perfection to the extent that we enrich ourselves with what we did not have. But it is a self-perfection, which is selfless thanks to the criterion of our human reason which is selfless.

So in the light of human experience we say that an action to be morally good, it must conform to reason. And human action is only good when it is according to human reason. And our moral life must be selfless and oriented to truth and directed by our reason, which is the faculty for knowing the truth; not by our whims and fancies, our advantages or pleasures. In conclusion to be morally good, an action must be according to reason as the faculty of the truth; the action must be in agreement with the truth, i.e., the whole truth about the dynamic subject, as totality considered in itself and in relation to the whole of reality. For the Christian, there are two sources of knowledge: human reason and revelation (reason illumined by faith) because truth about a Christian comes from human reason and revelation.

From the foregoing reflection we can say that it is our human reason enlightened by faith that is the criterion to see if there is a proportion (*accomodatio*, *proportio*, *conformatio*) between the intention of the acting subject and the external action (the means) to realize that intention. Sometimes human actions are made proportionate to an end by means of certain commensurateness, which results from the due circumstances. Very often it is prudence which enables us to insure due proportion. It is the virtue that enables one to make a morally good choice.

Now the intention or motivation of the acting subject in Christian morality should be love of God and love of neighbour as is clear from the New Testament. If Our Christian lives should take shape around the biblical command that we are to love God with all our being and our neighbour as ourselves (Mt.22: 34-40), then we have to acknowledge the fact that our calling to be lovers come to us from God who already loved us into existence. This means that the love with which we should live is an expression of gratitude for the love we have been shown by God.⁵ To live out of love -- well this is another motivation and this is what specifies Christian morality from all other moralities if at all there is any specificity. Love of God and love of neighbour must animate all our actions. Jesus articulated our fundamental

5. Vincent J. Genovesi, *In Pursuit of Love*, Wilmington, Delaware. 1987, p. 10

attitude: You shall love God with all your heart, soul and you shall love your neighbour as yourselves.⁶ About the claim of love of God there is no problem. The problem in morality often arises when it comes to the claims of love of neighbour. So in this article let me confine myself to the claims of love of neighbour.

2. Love: Fundamental Moral Attitude

According to the Scriptures, love of neighbour is the fundamental attitude, which has to inform and animate all the moral demands, which may affect us in our temporal relationships. "Through love we ought to be servants of one another because the whole law is fulfilled in one word: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself'".⁷ The important question in Christian morality is therefore: How can the fundamental attitude of love of neighbour be the principle of actualization of our temporal relationships? Since we have to function in a multiplicity of tasks, roles and situations and since to act means to deal in an active way with reality, the fundamental attitude of love of neighbour often requires the mediation of numerous moral attitudes or dispositions, virtues such as justice, chastity, humility, sincerity, gratitude etc.

But the problem of morality is more extensive than the question of moral *goodness or badness* of an action, which comes from the intention or attitude of the action, which comes from the heart. This is because there is a distinction between moral goodness or badness and moral rightness or wrongness. Both do not always coincide. There can be actions, which are good but not right; and there can be actions, which are right but not good. Thus the problem of morality is not only concerned with the intention or dispositions but also with moral *rightness or wrongness* of our actions. As Emmanuel Kant said an essential element in the scope of ethics consists in finding an answer to what we ought to do. How ought I to act in such a situation or what is the right thing to do in such circumstances? It refers to the rightness of actions that are morally appropriate to embody, capable of incarnating our disposition of love of neighbour. Hence when constructing a moral methodology based on the love and compassion of the Gospels, the real problem is related to the concrete material norms, the norms governing the material actions.

But before we go to the norms governing the moral rightness or wrongness of our actions, there is need to confront with the problem we

6. Mt 22:37-40, Mk. 12:29-34, Lk. 10:27.

7. Gal 5:13-14. Cf. also Mt. 7:12.

stated above regarding actions which are good but not right, and actions which are right but not good. This problem takes us to make a departure from the traditional models: human-the-artificer (teleology of Aristotle and Aquinas) and human-the-dutiful-citizen (deontology of Kant).

Again starting from human experience we make a reflection on the moral self. The first question in ethics at any level is 'what is going on?' only then can we ask 'what ought we to do?'⁸. Therefore, we have to ask what moral self is or in what relations self acts and seeks to be itself. From human experience we see that the human cannot live without belief in something that makes life worth living (trust or commitment). Hence moral self can be defined as a being that can trust in and commit itself to something - a being devoted to value. It is trust-fidelity that constitutes selfhood. This self is not in isolation. The self comes to knowledge of itself in the presence of other selves and its very nature is that of a being which lives in response to other selves. This too is a primordial experience. This social self is not only an I-Thou self but also an I-you self responding to a Thou, that is a member of an interacting community. Thus self is not a substantial entity existing in itself, with its own nature as the complete guiding principle of its life embedded in it but rather is a person existing as a being with others in a network of relationships. The moral self is not totally programmed by its nature, but is characterized by openness, freedom and the challenge to make itself and its world more human in and through its many relationships, which limit its creativity and freedom.

From human experience we see that human conduct begins with neither purposes (Aquinas) nor laws (Kant) but with responses (H.R.Niebuhr). A phenomenological reflection on all human existence seems to indicate that our lives are more understandable in terms of responding to the many happenings of human existence rather than adhering to a prearranged plan or goal. All our actions including moral actions are responses to some action upon us. Note we use the word response rather than reaction in so far moral actions are reactions that are informed by an interpretation of that to which response is made. Not only is moral behaviour of self is response, but also accountable, in that the response is to be fitted within a total interaction, which includes also the ability to anticipate the future reactions (responses) of others to our actions. Accountability implies the continuity of a self with a relatively consistent interpretation of what self is responding to (Social

8 J.L. Allen, "A Decisive Influence on Protestant Ethics" *Christianity in Crisis* Vol.23,1963, p.218

solidarity or community of agents). The regulative principle to bring all these elements of human moral behaviour would be "fittingness". And the moral self in this perspective is human being as "responder" who is involved in, responsive to, interpreter of, and accountable for one's actions in social solidarity. Such a one can be called human as responder.⁹ And the model can be called relationality -responsibility model.

Human the responder is concerned with the fitting action, the one that fits into a total interaction as response and as anticipation of further response and which alone is conducive to *the good* and which alone is the right. Such a responder is one who answers, inquires, replies to injunctions, and meets challenges ... experiences so common to all humans. Given the context of relations and functions, s/he charts a course between an ethics on the hand of conformity to a law or an order that is given *a priori* and an ethic that merely reacts in utter open-endedness to whatever is happening. But in such actions one has one's purposes and is guided by principles. Thus the relationality - responsibility model may not entirely supercede the two older models of moral self but may serve as an additional way of looking at ethical questions with particular relevance to the contemporary scene. It would certainly avoid the danger of a narrow personalism of an I-Thou relationship by viewing moral life in terms of the subject, existing in multiple relationship with God, with neighbour, world and self and one's actions in this context. A proper situating of the individual within the multiple relationships of God, neighbour and the world does justice to all the aspects of human existence, including the political and the social. "*Human persons* are not essential social beings because they are open to each other in I -Thou relationship, but also because they *need to live in social groups* and thus in appropriate structures and institutions'.¹⁰ The model shows that the human is responsible in the sense that s/he is answerable for her / his actions but also and preeminently in the sense that s/he is one who responds in a conscientious way to the demands laid upon her /him by God and the fellow humans. The model thus pays sufficient attention to the various dispositions and virtues that characterize the moral subject and form an integral part of her/ his growth and development.

Obviously, one determines what is good in terms of what will promote all values, not merely physical, but also psychological and social, which have

9 Cf. H.R.Niebuhr, *The Responsible Self*, New York, 1963

10 L. Janssens, "Artificial Insemination: Ethical Considerations" in *Louvain Studies*, Vol. VIII, Spring 1980, p.9

some appeal to the individual in one's multiple relationships with one's finitude and limitations. The model grounds the norms for human behaviour on the basis of what is experienced as good for the person and for the total human society but understood according to a relational criterion which gives importance to contexts and consequences but also gives moral value to aspects other than contexts and consequences. It maintains that the good is not separate from the right and the way in which the good or the evil is obtained is of moral consideration. From a philosophical point of view, this model gives more attention to relationships and to historicity of the person and less attention to immutable essences. Historicity is the essence of the human person and therefore lies at the heart of moral law. The meaning of a moral act is to be seen in the context of the personal encounter with existence rooted in history. An intrinsic morality would still be present in this model in the sense that the moral act is right or wrong in the total historical complexity; not because of something extrinsic as the will of a legislator.

The real issue posed for morality at this juncture is not simply the need to consider the overall context nor the concern to look for ethical principles pertinent to the situation. As James Gustafson has stated, the 'context' versus 'principles' is a misplaced debate. For, both situation and principles are inevitable elements in any moral activity. Those who begin with clarity and objectivity of moral principles must face the contingencies and complexities of their application to immediate situations; those who start with the inclusive responsibilities of the moral agent facing a given ethical decision must look for the greater temporal and rational perspectives which are in effect summarized in moral principles.

The model of relationality-responsibility is inclusive enough to embrace the central elements of morality: the nature of moral self, criterion of morality, the meaning and quality of moral action and the complexity of the context of human actions. In the midst of both enormous complexity and great historical change, this model could be an alternative to duty ethics (deontological) and goal ethics (teleological).

Since we consider a methodology of *Christian* ethics for judging the human actions, we will have to look into the actions of a person who is intent upon living morally as a Christian, i.e., we have to look at those actions from a Christian horizon or perspective. This means from what perspective we appreciate and interpret our value commitments. "Our way of perceiving and relating to basic values is profoundly shaped by our

whole way of looking at the world, i.e., our perception of basic values is very much a function of the perspective through which their meaning is 'filtered' in our reflection upon them".¹¹ How this horizon or perspective is formed is of utmost importance in a moral methodology. Apart from the cultural conditioning, religion or one's faith plays a significant role here. Though faith does not give concrete moral norms and rules for decision making or for giving concrete answers to the moral problems, it gives vitality and motivating dynamism and thus affects very much our perspective. Now Christian faith is the total commitment of ourselves in response to God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ. This faith "recognizes that divine self-disclosure is at once the self-disclosure of ourselves and our world. Thus it reveals human existence in its fullest and profoundest dimensions and directs our minds toward solutions which are fully human".¹² Thus Christian faith would say that Jesus is the absolute and definitive norm of the *humanum*. He is the standard by which every human life is to be evaluated.¹³ "The experience of Jesus is regarded as normative, because he is believed to have experienced what it is to be *human* in the fullest way and at its deepest level".¹⁴ He "is not one of the important aspects of Christian belief, he is not one of the truths espoused by Christian faith; he is not one of the realities proclaimed in Christian revelation. No, Christ is the summary of all those things. He is the way, truth, and life".¹⁵ "What is simply remarkable about Christ, this God our brother, is his complete responsiveness to the Father, who, as creator of all things, knows fully the meaning of our humanity and offers this knowledge to all who will listen".¹⁶ The uniqueness of this person is that he is both divine and human. Because he is divine, Christ could show fully and deeply the true humanity and no one can question the validity of his understanding of the true meaning of humanity and at the same time because he is truly human, Christ's struggle to incarnate the full richness of humanity and thus be a model for us. "Here, then, is the state of affairs:

11 James B. Tubbs Jr. *Art, cit.*, p. 117

12 *Ibid.*

13 Cf. Norbert Rigali, "Christ and Morality" in *Moral Formation and Christian Morality*. eds. Franz Bockle and J.M.Pohier, New York, 1978, pp. 14-15

14 R.McCormick, "Notes on Moral Theology" in *Theological Studies*, 38 (March, 1977),p.69

15 Timothy E. O'Connell, *Principles for a Catholic Morality*, New York, 1990, p.23

16 Vincent J Genovesi, *Op.cit.*, p.19

because Christ is really divine and really human, because he learned well the meaning of humanity and embodied that meaning in a uniquely rich way, we, as Christians, are fully confident that in following the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, we are not only maturing as Christians but are also developing as true human beings".¹⁷ Rooting our way of becoming human in the person and mission of Christ is to make ethics Christian ethics. Thus looking for a Christian morality inevitably leads us to meditate on the person of Jesus himself. Discipleship is an ethical dictate. Rather than replacing naturally perceived values, Christian faith illumines them, supports them and provides a context for their historical reading or application and gives morally relevant insights. Thus faith and reason complement and produce a distinct perspective. This leads us to affirm that a Christian ethics naturally is Christocentric and anchored in charity (*agape*).

Christian ethics is anchored in charity (*agape*), because Christ voiced his own understanding of himself as a labour of love. "His life was not only an expression of his own love for us, but also a manifestation of the love our Father bears for us."¹⁸ It was precisely by his love, his life of caring service, his complete "being for others" that Jesus succeeded in showing us the way, and in making it possible for us, to be what God our Father has called us to be". Christian morality is simply "fidelity to the human vocation to love".¹⁹ When asked which is the greatest commandment Jesus' response was always Love of God and love of neighbour (Mk.12: 29-31; Mt 22:37-40). Thus the universal principle in Christian faith to guide and motivate Christian action is the principle: love of God and love of neighbour. And as I said above the problems of morality arises in the claims of the love of neighbour, I limit myself to its claims. Since love of neighbour is very essential and its claims bring in lot of problems in morality, we have to gain as much insight as possible into the Gospel love. "You shall love your neighbour as yourselves". Eight times the New Testament repeats this commandment (Mt 19:19; 22:39; Mk 12: 31,33; Lk 10: 27; Rom 13:12; Gal 5:14; Jas 2:8).

All love is rooted in the experience of where we become aware of being drawn beyond ourselves toward others. We live as Gospel like lovers when we are motivated to move beyond ourselves in order to care and support the lives of others²⁰. Let us look more carefully at the love which Christ, as God

17. Vincent J Genovesi, *Op.cit.*, p.21.

18. *Ibid.* p.22

19 Bernard Haring, *Morality is For Persons: The Ethics of Christian Personalism*, New York 1971, p. 125

20 Cf. Vincent J Genovesi, *Op. cit.*, p.30

has revealed to us. Known as *agape*, this love is a self-sacrificing and unconditional love, which leads Christ to live and die for us without waiting for us to prove that we are worthy of his love. Often we love people simply because we find them attractive, pleasing, having physical charm, intelligence and wit. This does not testify to the presence of love because we are still very much preoccupied with the effect that others have upon us. "We are, in other words, more aware of, and responsive to, *what* these others *have*, not *who* they *are*, and so we relate to them more in terms of their real or imagined contribution to our own lives, while failing to recognize and appreciate them for their own unique being"²¹. So much of what we pass as love is in fact not love at all, but the opposite of it. Also we fail in love not only by outright actions or conscious oppression of others, but by omissions, by being mindlessly ravenous, or irresponsibly self-centred by careless expenditures and egocentric amassing of material possessions without looking at the poor "Lazaruses" beneath our nose. While our conscience seems trained to reproach us more for things that we have done than for what we have left undone. For not to decide, is to decide, not to speak out is to approve, not to be with the victims, is to be with the oppressor. Our social, economic, and cultural and political structures are sinful. Lacking understanding of our social responsibility, we have a difficult time acknowledging the presence or even the possibility, of "social sin" in our lives, since our social failings are found quite often in the area of omissions²².

Christ-like love, *Agape*, according to St. James is impartial (Jas 2:1-9). It includes equal regard, treating every neighbour equal as *qua human existent* without any discrimination. In Christian faith this gets added emphasis as the basic reason for the impartiality of love because every human being is created in God's image, redeemed by Christ, called to be child of God and to participate in the eschatological Kingdom.²³ The impartiality of love prevents us from loving ourselves more than our neighbour. As outlined by Gene Outka,²⁴ this impartial character of *agape* is independent of our personal feelings and sympathy, it is unfailing, whatever be the neighbor's attitude and it is universal, i.e., nobody is to be excluded. A true notion of *agape* takes into account all these when situating true self-love. As Gene Outka says, self-love could be seen in the light of the four value judgements of

21. *Ibid.*

22. *Ibid.* pp.36-37

23 L. Janssens, "Norms and Priorities in a Love Ethics," *Louvain Studies.*, 6(1976-77) p.219

24 Gene Outka, *Agape: An Ethical Analysis*, New Haven, 1972, p. 56

self-love: "as wholly nefarious; as normal, reasonable and prudent; as justified derivatively from other-regard; as a definite obligation, independent of other-regard, though for some coincident with it".²⁵ The impartial character of *agape* takes into account three things: 1) equal regard for self and for others giving priority to primary and secondary relationships accordingly; 2) not to love ourselves more than our neighbour and 3) equal regard does not mean identical treatment.

Equal regard for self and for others giving priority to primary and secondary relationships: love of self does not mean selfishness and egocentric acquisitiveness. It means genuine self-regard and self-respect. In fact Gospel gives love of self as the model for the love of neighbour (Mt.22: 39). The reason for valuing the self is identical with those for valuing others, viz.; every person is a human being, God's image, and a child of God. It is this fundamental dignity and equality of each and every person *qua* human existent that is the basis of self-love. So love of self should not be based on the achievements, talents or abilities of a person, but simply on the fact that he is a human being.

Impartial character of *agape* prevents us loving ourselves more than our neighbour. It requires that our loving attitude should be equally concerned with the dignity of others as our own.

But impartial character of *agape* does not mean identical treatment. This is because within the framework of the fundamental equality each person is unique and irreplaceable in that each one has individual capacities, interests, needs and aspirations. To be efficient, our agapeic love must take account of everyone's originality and every one must be loved appropriately. This means not identical treatment, but treating each person in such a way as is appropriate to one's needs, aspirations etc.. *Agape* as equal regard must also take into account the neighbour in his social relationships. "The conduct of individual persons in the different areas of life has to be scrutinized in terms of its interpersonal significance and implications. No one is a self-enclosed individual; each one lives as a person in relation to persons."²⁶ There are many forms and degrees of relationships in society in terms of *co-existence, co-operation and co-participation*²⁷.

25 *Ibid.*

26 Josef Fuchs, "The Absoluteness of Moral Norms" in *Gregorianum* 52/3, 1971, p.436

27 Louis Janssens, "Norms and Priorities", *Art. cit.* pp.220-221

In terms of *society as co-existence* there are the primary relationships and the secondary relationships the development of which are important for the common good. The primary relationships are the so called I -thou relationships, such as among friends, husband and wife, parents and children, brothers and sisters. They are especially enriching, because in their reciprocity they recognize and promote the partners in their uniqueness and originality. Hence agapaic love gives a special place to these relationships. Then there are the secondary relationships, which are significant for social life, sanctioned by institutions and ratified by law, e.g. promises, contracts, conventions, treaties, agreements and accords. The fact that these are institutionalized, they have a secondary place in our agapaic love.²⁸

In terms of *society as co-operation*, we have to treat the distinction and interaction between subjective culture and objective culture. Subjective culture means the development of the person in his various capacities and talents. By objective culture we mean the sum total of all the realized values of subjective culture. It is the heritage of all realized values in every field. Between subjective culture and objective culture there is a dialectic relationship. One cannot flourish without the other. Now culture is social reality and requires the cooperation of everyone. This comes due to our fundamental limitations and hence the need for cooperation. Our diversity enables us to respond to co-operate and complete one another. We cooperate not so much by our commonness but by our originality. From these factors follow a number of demands for agapaic love. Firstly those who are able to work have the duty to contribute by their work. Work thus is social service. Secondly, if work is to contribute more to the benefit of the neighbour, every one should get a work that is corresponding to his originality and personal capacity. And thirdly, since every country and every area possesses its own special natural resources, it is only by world-wide co-operation the objective culture can be promoted and fostered for the benefit of all humankind. Here the rich countries in accordance with the order of charity (*agape*) have the duty to come to aid of many developing countries to develop their natural resources.²⁹

In terms of *society as co-participation*, we find that society as co-operation and society as co-existence are not coextensive, as at a time only a part of society's members (i.e., healthy young people) are able to work. Old

28 *Ibid*, pp.221-222

29 *Ibid*. pp. 222-224

people, children and the sick cannot. Hence the order of charity demands that those fit to work must provide for the needs of all. "In other words, the values of objective culture which are the fruit of co-operation must be oriented toward the subjective culture or personal development of every member of the society. And these values must be shared in such a way that everyone has access to what he needs in order to complete as fully as possible his subjective culture according to the demand of his originality: to each according to his needs."³⁰ All this leads us to give great importance to social justice, since our love has to mirror God's justice and sacrificial love. Even an enemy should be loved. But here our sacrificial love should "differentiate between attention to another's needs and submission to his exploitation... We should resist the latter, because it makes us objects (means instead of subjects... should resist the exploitation by the neighbour for his own sake. Love is concerned with the neighbor's wellbeing ... we have to make distinction between sacrifices concerning ourselves and those concerning innocent third parties.... in an unjust aggression the interests of the other innocent people are at stake, the protection of the most fundamental interests of societal life will habitually require us to defend the rights of the innocent party. It may even happen that for the same reason we ought to defend our own interests, when they concern the wellbeing of others."³¹

Agapdic love also demands from us to respect priorities in the area of premoral values, as there is a hierarchy in them. All things being equal, the higher value should be given priority. Talking about priorities, when Christian this is dominated by *agape*, the needs of the poor take priority over the wants of the rich; the freedom of the dominated takes priority over the liberty of the powerful; the participation of marginalized groups takes priority over the preservation of an order which excludes them.³² Also the urgency of the value has to be considered. Added to this, is also to be taken into account the likelihood of realizing values, i.e., choosing values which are lower in situations when we know that the possibility of realizing a higher value is hardly likely; whether is it a value in the long run and finally is to be taken account also the values protected by institutions which are likely to affect social life. Here it is worth mentioning the answers one should give to the questions before departing from the institutional rules: "Would I or someone else make the same judgement about the moral choice in any situation which is similar in the morally relevant aspects (requirement

30. *Ibid.* p. 225.

31. *Ibid.* p.228

32 D.Hollenbach, *Claims in Conflict*, 1979, p. 204

of universalizability)? What would happen if everyone were to perform a similar action in a similar situation (the generalization argument)? What will happen if others are influenced by our act to do likewise (the wedge arguments)?³³

3. Concrete Norms and Moral Conflicts

This *agapaic* love should be the motivation or fundamental disposition (attitude) that should guide all our actions in our temporal relationships as Christians. And the moral goodness or badness is finally determined by our intention or attitude. But the problem of morality is more extensive than the question of moral goodness or badness. The motivation or disposition requires us to choose the actions, which are apt to embody or realize our good attitude. On this depend the rightness or wrongness of an action. How can this fundamental attitude be realized by actions that are suited (proportionate) to it. This problem brings us to the consideration of external actions and the norms governing them, which we call, concrete material norms.

Now any action (external) done by us deals actively with material reality. Thus when an action is done it affects and disturbs the properties and laws of the action. This brings us to the connection and presence of premoral values and disvalues connected with every action of ours. The advantage we derive from doing the action brings us premoral values and the disturbance in the laws and properties that is caused by our actions on the material reality brings at the same time premoral disvalues. So in every external action we do there is the presence and connection of premoral values and disvalues. By *premoral values* we mean "those realities which are in us or outside us which, because of their properties, provoke in our experience a positive reaction ... 'valuable' and hence 'worthy' of promotion... (like) life, bodily and psychic health, pleasure and joy, friendliness, cultural values of science... etc. and by *premoral disvalues* we mean realities in us and outside us which, on account their qualities, we experience in a negative way as regrettable, harmful, detrimental and therefore as to be avoided and shunned ... (like) death, neuroses and psychoses, ignorance, error, violence, segregation etc."³⁴

Another problem that comes with any of our action is the ambiguity arising from temporality, which has the negative aspect that when we choose one action, we have to omit or postpone all others. "Every choice is a

33. Louis Janssens, *Art.cit.*, p. 230.

34. Louis Janssens, *Art.cit.* p.210

sacrifice." This is because our external actions follow one after another. Hence we have to consider which action we want to perform in a given moment as expression of our *agapaic* love.

But of course, considering the priorities that give proportionate reason, an agapaic ethic of responsibility must take into account the new findings in the various human sciences, and see whether action in case is instrumental or expressive or actions having meaning in themselves. It must take into account also the institutions and institutional norms that foster social life. What is crucial is the priority of order of values and order of charity in assessing the proportionate reason.

This methodology of *agapaic* ethic of responsibility in moral theologizing can be a useful framework for judging the rightness or wrongness of an external human action in the hands of fallible human beings struggling for ethical wisdom. This methodology should not be equated with consequentialism, utilitarianism, hedonistic or situationistic ethics. It may be called "mixed consequentialism", or "mixed deontologism" as there are principles and norms and values to assess the proportionality as we have seen above. What this methodology emphasizes is that it is impossible to make an ethical judgement about the rightness or wrongness of an action without taking into account the whole action - viz., the intention, the object of action, the circumstances and the foreseen consequences. Thus in conflict situations when we are forced to choose a premoral disvalue, we may admit or tolerate the disvalue if we have proportionate reason taking into account all the factors and restrictions we saw regarding the order of values and order of charity. But the problem is how does one calculate what are the consequences of an act, how does one measure what premoral value might outweigh the premoral evil, how does one judge which circumstance justify causing premoral evils.

It is true the problem remains. But what we can say is that this methodology is more consistent than the traditionalist methodology. When traditionalists say that some actions are intrinsically evil, they include all morally relevant circumstances in the object of the act. The inconsistency as McCormick points out is in the fact that traditional teaching does this only for some actions but not for others.³⁵ Thus for example, killing in self-defence wherein it takes the circumstance into account, but not for

35 Cf. Richard McCormick, *The Critical Calling: Reflections on Moral Dilemmas* since Vatican II. Washington D.C., 1989, pp.212-231

sterilization which in any circumstance is evil, or another example, theft in extreme need wherein circumstance is taken into account and artificial contraception which is always evil. Here ultimately what is important for McCormick is what counts as morally relevant and defining circumstance. If one had a proportionately good reason given one's total circumstance, causing a disvalue may be tolerated. And according to McCormick, proportionate reason should take into account three constitutive factors, viz., a) value at least equal to that sacrificed is at stake, b) there is no less harmful way of protecting the value here and now and c) the manner of its protection here and now will not undermine it in the long run. This last restriction makes McCormick's position different even from other so-called mixed consequentialists or mixed deontologists like Peter Knauer. Knauer reduces the various conditions in the principle of double effect into one and makes the proportionate reason so unqualifiedly the constitutive factor of the object of the action that causality of external act is no longer functional at all. For him moral evil consists in permitting or causing pre-moral evil without proportionate reason.³⁶ For McCormick, there is premoral evil even if good at stake is quantitatively proportionate to or greater than the less, if protecting it *in this way* or *in this manner* could in the long run undermine the good. Proportionate reason can mean two things viz., a) some proportionate reason is identical with good effect as produced immediately by the cause, b) other proportionate reason is motive 'introduced from outside' so to speak and superimposed on an external action whose basic meaning is already determined. In the latter case, intention, or proportion is not enough; circumstance might enter as a motive introduced from outside. Where Knauer has abandoned the physical structure of the act altogether, McCormick would prefer to say that it often times helps to determine the moral object, though it is not always sufficient by any means.³⁷ And to get the moral object, it is not enough the object of the action in the mere physical sense. It is sometimes necessary to turn to the circumstances or intention. Thus the moral object of a murderous act is not simply 'killing a human!' but "killing an *innocent* (circumstance) human. The object of self-defence is not simply 'killing a human' but 'killing an *unjust* (circumstance) aggressor. The difference is not precisely in the motive but in an objective circumstance.

36 Cf. Peter Knauer, "The Hermeneutic Function of the Principle of Double Effect," in *Natural Law Forum*. no.12, 1967, pp 132-162

37 Paul Ramsey and Richard McCormick, *Doing Evil to Achieve Good*, Chicago, 1978

As can be seen the method we have adopted in an *agapaic* ethic of responsibility is in line with that of McCormick. When talking about the order of values we spoke of values in the long run. Also we cautioned that the requirements of proportionate reason must be established not just in consideration of personal goals and interests but especially in the interests of society, culture and humanity. The search for what is to count as proportionate reason must be established based on the order of charity and order of values. Proportionate reason does not mean better results or socially desirable consequences. Consequences always play a determining role but not the sole reason. Proportionate reason relates to the basic human good in question.

Now there is a real difference in methodology between our position and that of traditionalists (or deontologists). The traditionalists judge actions with their circumstances to be either in accordance with right reason or not in accordance with right reason. If an action is not in accordance with right reason, it ought not to be done no matter what consequences might follow. Thus sterilization, artificial contraception etc. are against right reason, against the very meaning of sexual act. What we notice here is the different standards between these two positions for judging what is premoral disvalue or premoral evil. It is more in sexual ethics this problem still persists. It is time Moral theology had a real discussion on what the goods of marriage are and how contraception affects those goods.

Here it is worth noting the famous hypothetical case of a man volunteering to be a spy for his country.³⁸ As he volunteers he is told that one of the conditions must be that if he is captured, his country reserves the right to have one of its other agents to kill him, because the enemy nation will kill him anyway after using torture and drugs to extract the information they want and also because of harm that would come from his revelation if he were to reveal his knowledge. Now, because the spy is patriotic and because of reasons given above, he volunteers for the assignment and consents to those conditions. He is captured. He is shot by his own nation. Is this murder? If we judge by definition of murder, all the factors viz., a) agent has intention of killing, b) victim is innocent, c) victim is non-aggressive (not self-defence), d) the agent has no right to take life (not the case of State appointed executioner) - all the factors that seem to make a case of murder is

38 This example is cited in the book of Vincent E. Rush, *The Responsible Christian*, Chicago, 1984

present. Is this murder? Here we have additional circumstances: The agent's consent to the deed, his own benefit from the deed (preferable for him to die before being tortured rather than after) and enormous benefit to the common good. Do these factors change the case?

This is where the deontologist method and our method differ. We hark back to the Gospel and behaviour in New Testament as well as Aquinas, which has always insisted on taking account of all the circumstances. Deliberately ignoring some circumstances while weighting others is hardly a way to be moral. "Therefore while one must respect the case for intrinsically evil actions which are wrong by definition, one cannot be moral if one ignores the fullness of any act *in the concrete*... this limiting of vision to only the factors contained in a definition is not Gospel behaviour and has never been the main tradition of the Catholic community although in the recent past it seems to have become the vogue."³⁹

The traditionalists or deontologists like Paul Ramsey, Germain Grisez⁴⁰ would insist that we should always be open to all the basic goods. Whereas our methodology would say that because of the limitations imposed upon us by the ambiguity of temporality and spatiality (actions done in space always having side effects) and sin-filled situations, even choices between basic goods have to be made. We would have to compare the various basic human goods. This would mean choosing in favour of one basic good rather than another in a particular concrete situation, if there were sufficient proportionate reason. Grisez insists that such talk of proportionate reason makes no sense because the basic human goods are incommensurable. According to him, to act directly against a basic good is to subordinate it to whatever leads to that choice. One may not do that because basic goods are basic. It is by clinging to such goods through thick and thin the human nature is perfected.

We cannot agree with this position. Human beings are not disincarnate spirits. The good we achieve is often at the expense of the good left undone or the premoral evil caused. Our choices are mixed. This intertwining of good and evil in our choices brings ambiguity into the world. Thus good is

39 Vincent E. Rush, *Op. cit.* p. 126

40 Cf. Paul Ramsey and Richard McCormick, *Doing Evil to Achieve Good: Morality in Conflict Situations*, Chicago, 1978, pp 70-71 and Germain Grisez, *Abortion: Myths, the Realities, and the Arguments*, Washington D.C., 1970

tainted by hurt, imperfection. Health is presented by pain and disfiguring mutilation.⁴¹ In an *agapaic* ethic of responsibility methodology, e.g. a person telling a lie to a homicidal maniac in order to save the life of a proposed victim would be justified. In this concrete case, the basic of good of knowledge is compared with the basic good of life and good of knowledge is sacrificed, even directly, in order to preserve the basic good of life. We do "admit that weighing of values is very difficult, especially when values from different areas of morality conflict. Which is, for example, more important: personal relationship or chastity, life or marital fidelity, honesty or reputation; justice or health, and so on? Not an easy matter to settle in individual cases or in terms of general norms."⁴² We admit that the problem of apparent incommensurability of the basic good remains. No proportionalist has ever claimed to have produced an adequately satisfactory way of comparing the basic goods. The relevance of the contextual information depends upon our knowledge of the subject concerned. Thus any attempt to compare basic human goods would raise epistemological problem.

Grisez would argue that abstractions like the basic good of knowledge are independently existing realities that always commend our respect and demand our protection. Hence in the example above, basic good of knowledge (truth) was greater than the human life and human person should always submit to it. It is by clinging to such ideas through thick and thin human nature is perfected. We would disagree with Grisez, because according to us there are no such independent realities in concrete situations, and even if there are, they certainly cannot be settled by an appeal to self-evident perceptions in the face of conflict of values. In situations where there is conflict of values, we do not merely compare abstract ideas but take into account each concrete circumstance. Faced with conflict of values between basic human goods of truth, life, friendship etc. we say that the common denominator to compare these values is what contributes to the humanum in each particular situation. We have to "take into account values as they exist in that situation and as they are related to each other in the situation and in the people concerned."⁴³

41 Cf. Richard McCormick, *Ambiguity in Moral Choice*. The 1973 Pere Marquette Theology Lecture.

42 Thomas Srampickal, "Business Ethics and Ethical Theories" in *Jeevadhara*, November 1999, p. 420

43 Bernard Hoose, *Art. cit.* P.52

Besides, in our methodology, tolerating the premoral disvalue of sacrificing truth in the example is not determining ourselves against it. As our knowledge of what it is to be human and what basic goods contributes the perfection of the humanum increases, we learn which contextual items are relevant and which are not, and which in turn would improve our capacity to make judgements about moral rightness or wrongness. "It does not seem to me that this necessarily leads to a need or completely new thinking every time we are faced with a conflict of values. Wisdom accumulates over time and becomes common property.... we need to learn from human experience which kinds of choices best promote human flourishing in various types of situations. If we wish to talk in terms of human goods, it seems we must say that, inevitably, in different situations, right choosing will involve different mixtures or cocktails of goods. ... On rare occasions, as new knowledge about what it is to be human, we may have to revise our ideas about which cocktails are the best in particular situations."⁴⁴ What we have to make sure is how human flourishing, the basic human goods, simply human persons can best be served in the given circumstances. We admit that all this require greater concentration on the dignity and worth of the human person and greater openness to the possibility of new knowledge about the humanum and about the premoral values and premoral disvalues. "Ethics is at root an empirical study... Ethics is inevitably provisional, revisable, for the same kind of reason that our beliefs about astronomy, physics, or medicine are revisable." We would often disc⁴⁵

Conclusion

Agapaic ethic of responsibility is a methodology that moves the discipline of moral theology out of the confines of a static approach to a dynamic one to grapple with conflict situations and moral dilemmas in our life. It is open to and a dialogue with concrete human situations and historicity. This methodology describes moral life more in terms of our response to the gracious gift of God. A phenomenological and existential reflection on our existence seems to confirm this scriptural understanding of our moral life as responding to the many happenings of our existence rather than adhering to a pre-determined pattern. Agapaic ethics of responsibility shows not only that we are responsible in the sense that we are answerable for our actions but also and pre-eminently in the sense that we are persons

44 *Ibid.*

45 Gerard J. Hughes, "Natural Law Ethics and Moral Theology" in *The Month*, March 1987. pp. 100-101

who respond in a conscientious way to the demands laid upon us by God and our fellow humans in concrete situations. Emmanuel Levinas sees ethics above all as responsibility for the other. With its horizon of *agapaic* love and underlying theme of responsibility this methodology tries to decipher a lifestyle for us based on the Gospel values, making allowance for a morality of growth, essentially marked by responsibility for the other. The fundamental ethical task today is to realize the most desired and the best possible humanum, which finds expression in the human person in totality. This methodology aims at this task by offering us a fresh vision of values and principles. Thus it provides a framework within which we can make moral judgements as responsible persons so that our lives become best possible mediations of the Gospel values to the temporal realities and relations and guides us in establishing a pattern of moral life as authentic disciples of Jesus. We need such a vision and methodology if we are to face successfully the many challenges touching human life at the dawn of this new century. We do not claim that this methodology would give all answers to all our moral dilemmas. But it certainly is a humble endeavour to elaborate upon the insight and wisdom of our moral traditions, which has to be refined to chart a new direction in Christian ethics at the dawn of the third millennium.

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Sexual Spirituality

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The very title of this article may spring surprise on those of our readers who have only a negative or partial view of sexuality. Seen in its true perspective, sexuality has important part to play in the development of spirituality and the building up of the Kingdom of God on earth. This is what is emphasized in the article. The author is Professor of Moral Theology at St. Francis Theological College, Kottayam.

The title of the article *Sexual Spirituality* may anger some readers and disturb still others. To many, I hope, it will be welcome in a Church already moved into the twenty-first century.

The traditional dualities of natural-supernatural, matter-spirit, immanent-transcendent, sacred-secular, are becoming increasingly irrelevant to modern Christians. Not that they cannot recognize these distinctions when it is explained to them, but it no longer has much significance for their spiritual development. As Teilhard de Chardin said, the great need in spirituality is to discover the divine within the matter itself, our concerns, our humanity and our progress.¹

Endless discussion of the procreative requirements of sex has left the impression that sex has nothing to do with spiritual life. In its general failure to develop a positive theology of sexuality, the Church has caused a certain feeling that there is something about sexuality that impairs purity of Christian life. Besides, a ruinous dichotomy has come to develop between those who are interested in sex and those who are concerned with spiritual life. Happily enough, today the way appears to be clear for the affirmation of the rightful place of the sexual in spirituality.

Notably, all things considered, the most important part of Christian sex is its spiritual dimension which, while often overlooked, has a long-standing

1 See Thomas Gannon and George Traub, *The Desert and the City* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1969), p. 259.

history in biblical thought and Christian tradition. Praised in the Song of Songs and given full attention and respect in Paul's writings in his invitation to glorify the Lord in our bodies, the sexual aspect of human life, although open to misuse or disregard, eminently participates in its own way in the building up of the Kingdom of God. In the theology of Thomas Aquinas the most excellent quality of marriage lies in its role in the spiritual life.² John Paul II alerts us to the nuptial meaning of the body. Designed into creation itself sexuality is a reminder of our interpersonal nature. Without falling into the theory that woman and man are partial persons without each other, the Pope argues that in being created sexual, we receive a kind of divine memorandum, a sign that we are not created solitaires. We are social beings as marked in our bodies with a clue to our deepest identity as created for God and for each other.³

1. Misunderstandings of the Past

The traditional Christian attitude to human sexuality tends to be negative and sexual life is not regarded as having any positive role in spiritual life. On the contrary, it is seen as a sign of the sinful and degenerate human state. In the traditional theological framework sexuality, seen principally as a physical reality, has been considered at least as a serious hindrance to spiritual life. Spiritualistic dualism has so marked Christian thought and experience that salvation has been associated with disembodiment and release from the realm of the flesh into the "higher" life of the spirit. The body, grudgingly admitted to be good because it is God's handiwork, has in practice been viewed as a terrain inhabited by the devil. Sexual abstinence was regarded as an essential prerequisite for human spiritual development.

Insofar as Christian thought attributes a positive role to human sexuality, this is to be found only within marriage. Even here sexual life is accepted as a necessary function for procreating children and as a concession to those who are not strong enough to practice celibacy. Although marriage itself is said to betoken love between Christ and the Church, its specifically sexual aspect does not appear to have any real spiritual meaning in its own right, apart from biological, social, and racial considerations. Practically, if not theoretically, the basis of this attitude is the feeling that God and matter are simply incompatible.

2 Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Sentences*, 31.

3 See David Thomas, *Christian Marriage*, Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1988), p.188.

Alan Watts forcefully argues that the practical effect of a philosophy in which God and nature are incompatible is dangerous indeed.⁴ For when knowledge and love of God is considered to exclude other goals and other creatures, God is actually put on a par with his creatures. The knowledge of God and the knowledge of creatures can exclude one another only if they are of the same kind. One must choose between yellow and blue, as two of the same kind colour, but there is no choosing between yellow and round, since what is round can also be yellow. If God is universal, the knowledge of God should include all other knowledge as the sense of sight includes all the different objects of vision. But if the eye should attempt to see sight, it will turn in upon itself and see nothing.

Watts further feels that if we think of spirituality less in terms of what it avoids and more in terms of what it positively is and if we think of it as including an intense awareness of the inner identity of subject and object, the human and the universe, there is no reason whatsoever why it should require the rejection of sexuality. On the contrary, this most intimate of relationships of the self with another would naturally become one of the chief spheres of spiritual insight and growth.

This does not at all mean that the monastic and celibate life is an aberration, for the human is not absolutely obliged to have sexual relations, nor even to eat or to live in exceptional situations. As under certain circumstances a voluntary death of fast is justifiable, so also is sexual abstinence - in order, for example, that the force of the libido may be expended in other directions on the promotion of the kingdom of God. The common mistake of the religious celibate has been to suppose that the highest spiritual life absolutely demands the renunciation of sexuality, as if the knowledge of God were an alternative to the knowledge of woman, for instance, or to any other form of experience.

Watts refers to the life of virginity undertaken as a monogamous marriage of the soul with God, as an all-consuming love of a creature for the Creator in which love for a mortal woman or man would be a fatal distraction. In this context sexuality is often renounced, not because it is evil, but because it is a precious and beautiful possession *offered* to God in sacrifice. But this raises the question as to whether renunciation as such is sacrifice in the proper sense of an act which "makes holy" (*sacer-facere*) the thing offered.

4 Alan Watts, *Nature, Man and Woman* (New York: The New American Library, 1958), pp. 123 - 132.

For if sexuality is a relationship and an activity, can it be offered when neither the relationship nor the activity exists? Does a dancer offer her dancing to God by ceasing to dance?

Such offering of sexuality to God is in all probability a survival of the idea that a woman's body, and sexual enjoyment, is the property of her husband, to whom she is bound to reserve herself even if he does not actually live with her. By analogy, the body of the celibate becomes the property of God, dedicated to him alone. But this is not only a confusion of God, says Watts, but also the likening of the Creator-creature relationship to a strictly barbarous conception of marriage. Obviously, the possession of a body is not a relationship to a person; one is related to the person only in being related to the organism of another in its total function.

The offering may be defended by saying that God uses the sexual energy of his human spouses in other ways, diverting it into prayer or into acts of charity. With this Watts does not wish to quarrel - provided that it does not exclude the possibility that God may use it for sexual activity itself as an aspect of life no whit less holy than prayer or feeding the poor. The vocation to sanctity should hardly be a specialization on the same level as writing, medicine, or mathematics, for God himself - the "object" of sanctity - is no specialist. Were God so, the universe would consist of nothing but formally religious creations - clergymen, bibles, churches, monasteries, rosaries, prayer-books, and angels.

Quite clearly the notion that the human is really a bodiless spirit or soul who has been embodied temporarily as a result of the fall, and even as a punishment for falling, so that salvation consists in freeing the soul from the body, is no part of Christian doctrine. From the Christian point of view human reality, now or hereafter, is incarnate self, not any bodiless entity of spirit or pure soul. To view the human as a bodiless entity that has fallen into a body for this transient life and in order to expiate sin, is to commit the deepest kind of evasion, to embrace the deepest kind of lie.

For if the human reality is incarnate self it has to be recognized how closely it is involved with sexuality, at least so far as the awareness of it is concerned. Humans really begin to experience this reality when they become aware of this sexual nature. Sexuality is not merely an accident of this reality. It is not merely another accretion. On the contrary, it is the living, flowing energy whose physical aspect is but one mode of its expression. Moreover, it not only confers, or communicates, the sense of own reality, it is also the medium that puts one in contact with other realities and other incarnate selves. Through it one is related to all creatureliness.

It is hardly necessary to point out that what is meant by sexuality here is not to be confused with that male prurience and female provocation which go by the name of "sex" in so much of today's literature and cinema and behaviour. What is indicated is a form of energy which is as it were the life-blood of the natural world. It relates the human to the natural world and it is through it that one communicates or communes with all its various manifestations, whether these are in other human beings or in rock, tree, sea, and sun. There can be a spiritual element present in a sexual awareness of things.⁵

Sexuality is a danger whenever it is exploited or forced, when it is a deliberate, self-conscious, and yet compulsive pursuit of ecstasy, making up for the stark absence of ecstasy in all other spheres of life. Ecstasy, or transcending oneself, is the natural accompaniment of a full relationship in which we experience the "inner identity" between ourselves and the world. The sexual orgasm usually remains the one easy outlet from human predicament, the one brief interval in which one transcends oneself and yields consciously to the spontaneity of one's organism. More and more, then, orgasm is expected to compensate for defective spontaneity in all other directions, and is therefore abstracted or set apart from other experiences as *the* great delight.

By associating sex with evil we make *the* great delight an even greater fascination and thereby unknowingly assist the growth of all the refinements of 'civilized' lust. Considered from the standpoint of society as a whole, puritanism is as much a method of exploiting sex by titillation as black underwear. It would not be unreasonable to regard puritanism, like pornography, an extreme form of sexual "decadence".

If puritanism and cultivated licentiousness are not fundamental deviations from nature, they are simply the opposite poles of one and the same attitude - that, right or wrong, sexual pleasure is *the* great delight. This abstracts sexuality from the rest of life (or attempts to do so) and, as such, it hardly begins to realize its possibilities. Abstract sexuality is partial - a function of dissociated brains instead of total organism. For when sexuality is set part as a specially good or specially evil compartment of life, it no longer works in full relation to everything else. In other words, it loses universality. It becomes a part of doing duty for the whole - the idolatry of a creature worshipped in place of God, and an idolatry committed as such by the ascetic as the libertine.

5 Philip Sherrard, *Christianity and Eros* (London: SPCK, 1976), pp. 39-42.

So long, then, as sexuality remains in this abstract way it remains a "demonic" and un-spiritualized force, un-spiritual in the sense that it is divorced from the universal and concrete reality of nature.

We must see that sexual interactions are religious, social, metaphysical, and artistic. Sexuality will remain a problem so long as it continues to be the isolated area in which the individual transcends himself and experiences spontaneity. One must first allow oneself to be spontaneous in the whole play of inner feeling and of sensory response to the everyday world.⁶

2. Intimate Relationship between Sexuality and Spirituality

The intimate relationship between sexuality and spirituality should be evident from the following considerations:

1) The Christian quest for holiness is a call to total human integration. Through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ human beings are summoned to mirror more closely the image of God in which they are created. Spirituality is the style by which the believer integrates all aspects of life. Clearly, then, sexuality, the human capacity to establish relationships with others as body-persons, assumes a key role in this life journey towards holiness. The call to holiness demands that Christians embrace their sexuality, try to understand it and grow into the full potential which this gift of sexuality promises.

Yet, more authentic to the heart of both Christian and Jewish faiths is the claim that the experience of salvation in this life, incomplete though it may be, involves a greater realization of our sexual wholeness. If sin is basically alienation, salvation is reconciliation. If sexual sin is fundamentally alienation from divinely intended sexuality, sexual salvation involves reconciliation and reintegration of the sexual self. It is the "resurrection of the body".

The disordered sexuality of the Western (and some other) cultures is surely due to the fact that the sexual relationship has never been seriously integrated with and illumined by a philosophy of life. It has had no effective contact with the reality of spiritual experience. It has never even achieved the dignity of an art, as in the Indian *Kamasutra*, and would thus seem to rank in our estimation far below cookery. Theoretically, the Christian sacrament of matrimony is supposed to sanctify the relationship, but in practice it does so only by prohibitions. We have dubbed the relationship

6 Alan Watts, *Nature, Man and Woman*, pp. 133-136.

"animal", and animal we have for the most part let it remain. Matrimony has not so much ennobled it as fenced it in, trusting naively that "true love" would somehow find a way to make the relationship whole and holy. Generally speaking, the style of philosophy which we have followed and the type of spiritual experience which we have cultivated have not lent themselves to a constructive application of sexuality.

2) Catholic theology of marriage was implicitly aware of the links between spirituality and sexuality when it acknowledged marriage as a vocation and even a sacramental means of grace. But it rarely explored the ways in which, through marriage, the partners were brought closer to each other and to God, nor did it consider the ways in which the specifically sexual dimensions of marriage contributed to its growth in grace. Although the traditional theology instinctively sensed that spirituality and sexuality were related, it could not really explicate this relationship or develop it in a manner applicable to all Christians, including singles.

3) A genuine understanding of human sexuality will help us realize how spiritual it is. Bear with me as I repeat some ideas I have already mentioned in another context. Sexuality is a dimension of our existence as embodied persons. In the words of Stanley Grenz, at its core a particular human existence as male or female includes a fundamental incompleteness, one which is symbolized by biological sex.⁷ Through sexuality we give expression to our basic incompleteness as embodied persons. In this way, our sexuality calls us to move toward completeness. It forms the dynamic that lies at the basis of the uniquely human drive towards bonding. This earning for completeness also forms the basis of the interpersonal and religious dimensions of human existence.

Sexuality is all-pervasive of the human person that it must be considered an essential dimension of what it means to be human. How we think, how we view the world, and how others view us are all affected by our sexuality.

Christian theology, specifically the doctrines of creation and resurrection support the thesis of the essential nature of human sexuality. God created us embodied beings, and in the resurrection we shall be re-embodied. Greek anthropology tended to speak of distinct of substantial entities generally termed body and soul.

7 Stanley Grenz, "The Purpose of Sex: Toward a Theological Understanding of Human Sexuality," *Crux*, 26 (June 1990), pp. 29-34.

The Hebrews, however, viewed the human person as a unitary, embodied being. The basic non-dualist anthropology of the Old Testament forms a context for, and is reaffirmed in the doctrine of resurrection. In fact, the resurrection offers the ultimate critique of all dualist anthropologies, for it declares that the body is essential to human personhood. Rather than the body being shed in order that the person enter eternity, as taught by the Greek tradition, the human person enters eternity as an animated body, as an embodied person transformed in one's entire being through resurrection. This intent is confirmed by the resurrection of Jesus.

The basic purpose of our existence as sexual creatures is related to the dynamic of bonding. Perhaps the most powerful statement of the relationship between sexuality and bonding is presented in the story of the creation of the woman in Genesis. "I will make a helper suitable to him" said the Lord. "It is not good for the man to be alone" (Gen 2:18). In contrast to his response to the animals, Adam immediately senses a bond with the female, bursting forth in joyous declaration: She is "bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh". The narrator concludes: "Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh." (v 24).

Our sexually based sense of incompleteness also forms the dynamic lying behind the search for happiness, a search which ultimately becomes the search for God. We long to have our incompleteness fulfilled, and this longing gives rise to the religious dimension of life. The drive for completion in fellowship is not surprising, because it is in keeping with the theological assertion that we are created in God's image. Just as God is the community of the trinitarian persons, so also God has created us for the sake of community, to find completion in fellowship with one another and together with our Maker.

4) Loving fruition of God in himself and in his participation is at the heart of Christian spiritual and mystical experience. Now the human person is the climax of divine participation. If proper fruition of food, drink, music, etc., can be God-experience, all the more so the proper fruition of a person. That is why sexual love, at its best, does have the capacity to break the self open not only to deep communion with the partner but also to the life-giving communion with God.

5) To a great extent this positive view of sexuality adopts the insights drawn not only from biblical studies, but also from humanistic psychology with its studies on the developmental process of human beings. Men and women grow to wholeness in relationship to others. The personal, inner

search, though essential, finds its necessary complement in one's growth in intimacy with others. Awareness of sin and of personal inadequacy finds a balance in self-acceptance as a body-person. Celebrating the body through a healthy sensuousness and achieving a freedom from fear-imposing sexual taboos represent milestones on the sexual-spiritual journey. Finally, the studies of Jungian psychology have added the notion of androgyny, the integration of both masculine and feminine traits in the person who would be truly whole and holy. In discovering the fullness to which one is called in the act of creation, a person discovers the loving, ever-creating God as well. This incarnational principle is essential in Christian spirituality.

This view of the role of sexuality in spirituality includes the distinctive life-styles of single, married and celibate people. All are called to the basic task of discovering their true selves and God within the setting of their sexuality⁸.

6) Christian feminists, such as Sally Purvis, reject the mind-spirit / body dualism of patriarchy.⁹ Experiences of "the spirit" are at the same time experiences of themselves and other creatures. Christian feminist spirituality is embodied spirituality.

Feminist Christians are reclaiming the erotic as a feature of spirituality. From a feminist perspective, the (patriarchal) Christian traditional teaching about human sexuality and its relationship to God is one of its deepest and most convoluted distortions of the Gospel. By splitting mind and body and associating males with rationality and females with the body, including sexuality, the tradition has wrongly harboured deep suspicion of human sexuality, at the same time that women have been defined in terms of their sexuality. Women's experience does not suggest that sexuality is an overwhelming force that if left to its own devices will run amok, destroying all order and values. Rather, the erotic is a source of power for new life, whether that life is a new human being or new energy for persons already embodied.

8 Daniel Didomizio, "Sexuality," in: Gordon Wakefield, ed., *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications, 1988), 363 - 354.

9 Sally Purvis, "Christian Feminist Spirituality," in: Louis Dupre and Don Saliers, eds., *Christian Spirituality: Post-Reformation and Modern* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1990), pp. 500-519.

3. Pastoral Considerations

Slavery to lust is not fun. Frantic or headlong expressions of affection are not beautiful. God wants to come along on our dates, for instance, not to diminish the enjoyment, but to intensify it.

In our shockingly gluttonous culture, it is very difficult to help people realize that more does not mean better. To engage in sexual relations, say, at the top of the ladder does not mean that more love is being shown. Some of the deepest manifestations of love are the simplest, such as a request to sit beside to glance at the flowers, or a light touch of hand. Convincing the modern generation of this is a larger task than we realize, because our over-scintillated, over-loud, over-explicit, over-indulged culture has numbed people to movements or sounds or sights or pleasures that are elegant, lovely, gentle and intelligent.

We need to refocus the aim of our moral education. Moral education must begin with enabling people to ascertain their personal self-worth through an awareness that their sexuality is the basis of their sharing in God's creative love for the world in its goodness.

In essence, Catholic morality has striven to short-circuit the process of spiritual development and expansion of people by identifying sexuality with concupiscence, or an odd creation that has to be rectified, rather than identifying sexuality with our inherent potential for goodness and love. This Augustinian prejudice has influenced the manner we approach the issue of sexuality, leading our catechesis to deal with sexuality primarily as a moral problem or liability rather than as a moral virtuality. This prejudice has produced invariably negative appraisals of sexuality - our heritage of Jansenism - and saddled us with an anthropology unworthy of human beings redeemed by Christ. Instead of empowering us to witness to the good news of our unique creative energy to effect reconciliation and redemption, we are made the bearers of the bad news of humanity's tendency to depravity.

We need to help our people to be ready for a lively future, not just to survive a dull present. Our objective is nullified if we are aspiring merely to keeping them unfamiliar with sexual intimacy until marriage. As a virtue, chastity can hardly refer to acts of self-abnegation or, much less, to an attitude of repression that in the psychological sense denies sexuality its role in a person's life. As a virtue, chastity relates to more than the fulfillment of a negative command. It aspires to enlarge a person's vision of the goal of the Christian life rather than to narrow that vision to the prohibited domain of genital acts.

Moral catechesis grounded on condemnation or on perfectionist ideals that are uneasy about mistakes does not spring from love but from a desire to control. No reasonable person wants others to make mistakes, but knows that mistakes are unavoidable. A person's moral character will develop more maturely and independently if he or she is assured of support and forgiveness after making mistakes. Disapproval and chastisement alone hinder moral and emotional development. Before people are capable of the kind of vision of faith that moves them to shun selfishness and act out of love and respect of the other in matters of sexuality, they must understand the natural good that their sexuality fits them for, so that they can respond to the action of grace. Too often we seek to bridle people's use of their sexual faculties, instead of assisting them to get to the point where self-control is an outgrowth of their self-esteem. To do this we must be adults who show others how to love themselves so they can love and not use their neighbour.

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The Challenge of AIDS in India: Some Ethical Issues

Clement Campos

The alarming figures of HIV infected people in the world and especially in India today are indications of the ever increasing menace that we are facing in this new millennium and unless we take immediate and appropriate measures our younger generation shall be doomed. The article deals with such measures. Dr. Clement Campos, C.Ss.R. may be contacted at Holy Ghost Church, Bangalore.

According to the latest figures posted on the Internet, UNAIDS, Geneva, issues the following statistics:

16,000 people each day are newly infected with HIV.
Over 50% are people between 10 - 24 years. Globally,
a total of 30.8 million people are living with HIV.

The number of people living with HIV in South and
Southeast Asia is 5.8 million.

700,000 young people contract HIV every year in Asia
and the Pacific.

India has the largest number of HIV infected
persons in the world (3-5 million). It is estimated that
two adults get infected every minute. 0.5 million
young people, 230,000 women and 30,000 children get
infected every year.¹

These figures are truly alarming. Indications are that in the next few decades AIDS will become even more widespread in society. There is an urgent need to react strongly against this crisis that looms large over the country. The Church is not unaware of the situation. It appears, however, that the response is sporadic and that there is lack of a concerted plan to deal with the crisis. It is for this reason that in April 1999 there was a meeting of Church-related bodies in Delhi organized by the Catholic Hospital

1 Source: www.un.org.in/Agencies/un aids.htm

Association of India to discuss the issues involved and try to formulate a common response.

At the meeting it became evident that a few initiatives had been undertaken by some religious - in the area of care for people with AIDS, educating people to responsibility, and preventing the spread of the pandemic. Concerning ethical issues, what caused consternation was the statement that some Catholic health facilities refused to admit or treat people diagnosed as suffering from HIV/AIDS. There was debate also on the questions of condom usage and needle sharing as a means to contain the spread of AIDS. While it was felt that Church bodies must support the stand of the Church on these matters, there were incidents reported of religious actually involved in the distribution of condoms and needles among high risk groups. Further, there was the issue of networking with groups (Governmental or NGOs) that do not share the same ethical opinions as the Church whether Church-related bodies could be involved with these groups. It was obvious that there is a need for clarity with regard to ethical issues especially when the hierarchy in India has been notoriously slow in providing leadership in moral matters.

In responding to the crisis of HIV/AIDS the Church has to deal with 3 issues in particular: It needs to provide a vision and a context within which it can carry out its role; it needs to respond in a caring, compassionate and practical manner to people with AIDS; finally, it needs to develop a strategy to train people in responsibility so that the pandemic may be contained.

The question of providing a truly Christian vision and a context cannot be stressed too much. From the time that AIDS made its appearance there have been many who have referred to it as a punishment from God, a divine retribution especially for the sexual sins of human beings. Not only does such an approach distort the image of God, it also hinders a truly compassionate response to people with AIDS. As Cardinal Joseph Bernadin stated: "God is loving and compassionate, not vengeful. Made in God's image, every human being is of inestimable worth, and the life of all persons, whatever their sexual orientation, is sacred and their dignity must be respected. ... Jesus did not hesitate to proclaim a radical ethic of life grounded in the promise of God's kingdom, he never ceased to reach out to the lowly, to the outcasts of his time - even if they did not live up to the full demands of his teaching."² In its response to the crisis of AIDS the Church has to combine

2. Cardinal Joseph Bernadin, "The Church's Response to the AIDS Crisis", *Origins* 16 (1986) 383-385, at 384.

courage and compassion: courage to proclaim the truth and compassion to minister to the needs of the victims.

M. Vidal suggests that the ethical issues of AIDS can be synthesized around two basic criteria: the criterion of "responsibilization" and the criterion of "non-discrimination". The prime function of ethics in this regard is to raise the level of responsibility of everyone connected with AIDS especially in the areas of prevention, transmission and healing. Non-discrimination can be stated positively as the criterion of inclusion or solidarity. The starting point is the criterion of acceptance of the other whom I cannot 'shut out' but whom I must 'bring in' in a special way to the dynamic of human solidarity.³ The Church must bear witness to the inclusive nature of her compassion and protest against discrimination by a broad policy of acceptance of people with AIDS and an obligation to care. It must further be involved in the task of responsibilization - educating people to responsibility.

In this article I limit myself to dealing only with the ethical issues A) in hospital practice, B) the question of the use of condoms and safe needles in preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS and C) the social issues.⁴

Hospital Practice

Obligation to Care for the Patient

It is unethical to deny a patient with AIDS medical treatment since it is denial of a fundamental right to care based on the equal dignity of all human beings and violates the claim to just and fair treatment irrespective of their physical condition or the cause of it. The Catholic Hospital Association of India (CHAI) has rightly decided that healthcare institutions have an obligation to establish a policy that guarantees optimum care, resists any form of discrimination, helps in promoting research and provides educational and counselling support. As Pellegrino suggests there is also a collective responsibility to reaffirm the obligation of all doctors to treat HIV infection, to take action against those who do not, and to support physicians who have become infected. The profession has great influence on society and should be an advocate for nondiscriminatory, compassionate and competent care of all HIV infected patients.⁵

3. Marciano Vidal "The Christian Ethic: Help or Hindrance? The Ethical Aspect of AIDS", *Concilium* (1997/5): 89-98, at 92-94.
4. I have used some material from my article, "A Catholic Hospital in India is asked to Cooperate with an HIV Prevention Program", in James Keenan et al. eds. *Catholic Ethicists on HIV/AIDS Prevention*, New York: Continuum, 2000, 199-211.
5. Edmund Pellegrino, "Treatment Decisions and Ethics in HIV Infection", *Dolentium Hominum: Church and Health in the World 5:1* (1990), 116-117.

Unfortunately, despite the guidelines of the Catholic Hospital Association of India (CHAI) that state that no one must be denied admission or treatment in hospitals because they suffer from HIV/AIDS, some institutions are reported to have flouted these norms and turned away people with AIDS. This is ethically unacceptable. Sadly, it is fairly common for private hospitals to insist on testing patients for HIV before admitting them. Those who are seropositive are refused admission. The reasons usually given are fear of contracting the disease, lack of protective equipment and lack of insurance cover or the fear that other patients will keep away due to the fear of contracting AIDS. From the physicians' perspective this goes against all the basic principles of medical ethics (beneficence, non-maleficence, respect for persons and justice). Ignorance accounts for much of the attitude of fear. People are afraid of what they do not comprehend. However, this cannot be an excuse for violent or discriminatory behaviour against those who are infected. While individuals have the right to reasonable protective cover in terms of procedure, gear and insurance as well as protection from infection, this cannot be done in a way that dehumanizes or victimizes those already infected. As E. Pellegrino points out, the physician's primary obligation is to treat the sick without discrimination. He grounds this duty in the nature of medical knowledge and the covenant physicians enter into with society when they accept a medical education and take an oath of commitment to the care of the sick.⁶

Pellegrino's arguments can be stated as follows:⁷ There is a fiduciary relationship that exists between physician and patient that justifies the invasion of the patient's privacy. To refuse treatment violates this relationship. Medical care is not a marketable commodity in the sense of being a matter of price and quality and distribution and a physician is not free to deny care to a patient in need of it. Medical knowledge is non-proprietary and doctors also enter into a social covenant with society for a social purpose and it is this that enables them to acquire knowledge gathered from all patients by all physicians. It is also the society that largely supports their education. Society has a rightful claim on the services of physicians in public emergency. The medical professional enters into this covenant to provide a service that at times involves some risk. The covenant cannot be nullified because of a danger now present - very much as a fireman or police-

6. Pellegrino, 113.

7. I rely here on a summary of Pellegrino's arguments by Richard J. Devine, *Good Care, Painful Choices: Medical Ethics for Ordinary People* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1996) 163 -164.

man cannot refuse to help because of danger. Catholic physicians and medical institutions must give the lead in this regard.

Confidentiality

One of the effects of discrimination and stigma is that people tend to keep their condition hidden from others and they seek refuge behind the principle of confidentiality and the right to privacy. In an interesting development, the draft national AIDS policy, which is pending approval from the Union Cabinet, is likely to include a provision to ensure that in case a person was found to be positive, his or her partner would be informed about it, so that he or she would not fall a prey to the disease.⁸

The physician has a *prima facie* obligation to confidentiality. In the case of AIDS, however, there can be a conflict between the patient's right to privacy and either (1) the public health concerns of responsible medical authorities or (2) the right of the patient's spouse or partner to avoid infection. This will continue to be a problem as long as AIDS remains a life-threatening disease.⁹

With regard to the question of public health, at the moment it does not seem necessary for the identity of the infected person to be made known outside of the medical team treating him. Besides, even when public authorities legitimately wish to keep track of the disease through statistical records, the lack of information and counseling services or voluntary testing programmes make them ineffective. Besides, unless confidentiality is guaranteed people will not come forward voluntarily either for testing or for the services offered. In these cases, confidentiality also serves as a defence against unjust social attitudes.

In the second case, if a physician discovers that the infected person does not wish to inform his partner or spouse nor to take any protective measures, there is an obvious conflict between the right to privacy and the spouse or partner's right to be protected from a potentially lethal disease. Privacy and confidentiality are not absolute values and when they conflict with the principle of justice and the right of an innocent party to be spared direct grave injury, they must give way. It is a requirement of justice that the patient reveal his condition, or failing that, the physician after informing the patient about what will be done should intervene and inform those at risk.¹⁰

8. *The Hindu*, October 6, 1998.

9. With regard to the question of public health, at the moment it does not seem necessary for the identity of the infected person to be made known outside of the medical team treating him.

10. Pellegrino, 114

B. Preventive Measures

From the time it became evident that among the routes of infection were sexual intercourse with an infected partner and the use of infected needles among drug addicts, the questions raised were whether it was ethical in such contexts to promote the use of condoms or safe needles as a way of preventing the spread of the disease. It is necessary to deal with the question of efficacy, morality and cooperation in this context.

Efficacy

There seems to be no dispute about the use of clean needles reducing the spread of infection among drug users. There is much debate about the efficacy of the condom or "safe sex". It has constantly been reported, especially in the Catholic media, that condoms are not safe. But Keenan and Jonathan Fuller present a different point of view. The Jesuit physician Jon Fuller presents at length three studies that demonstrate the dramatic effect that condom use has had in stemming the spread of HIV. The use of condoms may not be 100% fall-proof. But it significantly reduces the risk. As Fuller himself states, "condoms cannot make unsafe sex safe; they only make it less unsafe". But "for those individuals who choose to engage in high risk activities, condoms can reduce the risk."¹¹

There is another factor - namely, the fear that the promotion of condoms and safe needles will encourage irresponsible behaviour. Again, Keenan and Fuller indicate that, "it has now been well demonstrated that education which includes information about the appropriate use of condoms does not increase the rate of sexual intercourse, and in fact can lead to a delay in the age of first intercourse."¹² They similarly show that the needle exchange programmes do not lead to an increase of drug abuse.¹³ Yet, it is hard to shake off the feeling that campaigns that promote condom use or safe needles are not morally neutral. Implicit in them may be "an acceptance that people cannot, will not, or perhaps should not, drastically change their sexual (or habitual drug taking) practices."¹⁴

Morality

A publication of the Health Commission of the CBCI suggests that it is the wedding ring and not the condom that should be advocated as the

11. Cited in Kevin T. Kelly, *New Directions in Sexual Ethics: Moral Theology and the Challenge of AIDS* London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1998, 202.

12. Keenan and Fuller, 35.

13. Ibid

14. Robin Gill, 138

preventive against HIV/AIDS. This is a good indication of the conflict between what the Church sees as ethically right and the State sees as pragmatic and effective. Technical effectiveness is not necessarily an indication of ethical acceptability. In fact, the main criticism about the safe sex and clean needle campaigns is that they try to offer a technological answer to what is basically a behavioral problem. But there are some basic issues involved here: Can the State promote such campaigns? What is the role of the Church?

Health is obviously a moral issue and the State has the duty to safeguard the health of its citizens but it should seek to do so by ethically sound means. There is no doubt that the manner in which the matter is being publicized and the approach of the World Health Organization, making condom promotion and distribution a condition for receiving funds to support programmes for people with AIDS, leaves one with the impression that the only answer to the problem of HIV/AIDS prevention is condoms and clean needles. This sends out wrong signals. On the other hand when the Church leaders condemn out of hand even information about such means or disallow working with organizations who have a different approach, it gives the impression that the Church is not serious about the major moral issue of saving lives.

The answer would seem to be for the Government to strive to educate people to change their behaviour. In practice this would mean that they should inculcate a sense of responsibility in people infected with HIV not to pass on the infection and to suggest that the most effective way is to refrain from sex outside marriage and to be faithful within marriage. There seems to be a reluctance on the part of educators to speak of change in moral behaviour. The same agencies that have no compunctions in moralizing about alcohol consumption or cigarette smoking or eating habits, seem strangely hesitant in advocating moral responsibility in the area of sexual habits and drugs.¹⁵ But, obviously, the Government cannot control behaviour. It can legitimately suggest that if people will continue in their immoral high-risk activity, then the least they can do is to limit the possible damage through condom usage and clean needles. A similar approach has also been suggested with regard to educational programmes run by Catholics.

Toleration of the Lesser Evil?

An ethics of responsibility clearly indicates that there is an obligation not to spread disease. It would be seriously wrong and a grave injustice to

15. Robin Gill, 138

deliberately and knowingly communicate the disease to someone else. The infected person is obliged to take every reasonable means to avoid this. A problem arises when an infected individual refuses to act responsibly. Could one advise the use of a condom as a way of limiting the damage by appealing to the principle of toleration of the lesser evil? *The Many Faces of AIDS* suggested this and made an appeal to the tradition. Traditional authors such as Noldin, Genicot, and Mekelbach taught that it is sometimes permissible to counsel the lesser evil, e.g. stealing a lesser amount, getting drunk instead of committing murder. They defended this method because the object of the counsel was not evil but good: i.e., the lesser evil precisely as lesser. Two conditions were always given to justify this: (a) the person counseled is determined to commit and prepared for the commission of the greater evil; and (b) there is no other way of preventing the greater evil.

It is not that the lesser evil is not an evil or that it can be indiscriminately approved. Rather, in these circumstances where it is the lesser of two evils and the person is determined to do the greater evil, it is counsel *sub specie boni*, i.e., where an individual is determined to act irresponsibly, it is good to narrow down that irresponsibility. In the Catholic tradition this is not participation in the promotion of irresponsibility. The lesser evil is not really advocated but is merely tolerated when it is virtually impossible to convince an individual not to act in a way that would cause greater harm.¹⁶ It is not an approval of the evil but merely an attempt to limit the evil consequences of the action. In this case, it is suggested, one can counsel the use of condoms as a lesser evil to prevent greater moral harm and damage to the common good.¹⁷

Gonzalo Miranda draws attention to an important element, namely, "the serious risk of infection that persists even when using a condom suggests that abstinence is the authentic route for Catholic couples in such extreme situations. He questioned whether spouses with AIDS who truly loved their partners could subject them to such danger".¹⁸

C. Social Issues

The violation of human rights in relation to HIV/AIDS is widespread. The pandemic spotlights many formerly unrecognized inequalities and

16. Richard McCormick gives the example of drunk driving as parallel to the needle exchange programme. "We say, don't drive while drunk; let someone else drive. But supporting the designated driver doesn't mean we support over drinking; it simply means that we don't want the irresponsibility doubled." "Needle Exchange Saving Lives", *America* 179 (18-25 July 1998), 3

17. Gerald D. Coleman, *Human Sexuality: An All-Embracing Gift* (New York: Alba House, 1992), 388.

18. Quoted in John Norton, "Theologians say".

prejudices in our societies and reinforces long-term disparities. People with AIDS face isolation and discrimination in virtually all societies and cultures. Their physical symptoms are compounded by the psychological impacts associated with HIV/AIDS. The resulting illness and death is frequently suffered in loneliness and abandonment, as the infected are often isolated and even abused. People with AIDS suffer the loss of their own future, whether by losing the opportunity to have a family, or being deprived of chances for meaningful work, or losing their basic human rights.

Because of the attention constantly given to the issue of prophylactics, the impression often created is that AIDS is essentially an issue of sexual morality. It is not. It is more an issue of social justice, involving the confrontation between the individual and the protection of the common good. As, *Facing AIDS*, the Study document of the WCC indicates, socio-economic and cultural contexts are determining factors in the spread of HIV/AIDS and the WHO currently estimates that nine out of ten people with HIV live in areas where poverty, the subordinate status of women and children, and discrimination are present.¹⁹

An example of this injustice may be seen in the matter of allocation of resources. The distribution of resources for the treatment and care of people with AIDS and the prevention of HIV transmission has been extremely unequal. Although more than 80 percent of all HIV infections occur in the less affluent countries, they receive only a small portion of the international resources spent on AIDS. 'Apart from its response to the immediate effects and causes of HIV/AIDS, the Church conscious of the link between poverty and AIDS must continue to promote just and sustainable development. It also needs to pay attention to situations that increase vulnerability to AIDS, e.g. migrant labor, commercial sex activity and the drug culture. Finally it must also stand up for the human rights of the victims of AIDS who are often denied their fundamental right to security, freedom of association, movement and adequate health care.'²⁰

Conclusion

The HIV/AIDS pandemic poses an immense challenge to humanity and to the Church. The Church is called upon to show pastoral compassion in caring for people with AIDS, to show great sensitivity in dealing with the

19. *Facing AIDS: The Challenges, the Church's Response*, WCC Study Document (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1997), 66.

20. *Facing AIDS*, 105

moral issues raised by matters of treatment and prevention, and a passionate commitment to assume responsibility for the underlying social diseases, the virus of injustice and inequality, and to bring about change. This time of AIDS is a *kairos* moment. Enda McDonagh sums up well what is required of the Christian disciple:

The disciples of Jesus are called to follow the risk-laden example of Jesus in seeking the sick and the poor, the stigmatized and the excluded. They have to be stigmatized and excluded themselves in challenging some of the orthodoxies of their time in serving the deprived. Healing or plucking ears of corn on the Sabbath may be near blasphemy to certain "orthodox" leaders, but they illustrate the priorities of the reign of God: people before rules, the needs of the sick and the hungry before the concerns of the comfortable and powerful. In the face of HIV/AIDS Christians and Catholics, the Catholic community and Catholic moral theology, must be prepared to take risks with their own rules. The divinely inspired risks of Jesus and of the reign of God might shed a new light on such disputable but secondary issues as the use of condoms and the exchange of needles in attempting to prevent or reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS. Such practices are indeed secondary to the practices of compassion, justice, and inclusion needed to turn the crisis into *kairos*. They are secondary, too, to the kenosis required of all Christians for the new creation and new community of the reign of the God of Jesus Christ.²¹

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21. Enda McDonagh, "The Reign of God: Signposts for Catholic Moral Theology", Keenan et al, *Catholic Ethicists*, 322-323.

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